DISSENT

LIBERALISM--A MORAL CRISIS

THE ADA: VISION AND MYOPIA — IRVING HOWE

COMMITTEE FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM — MICHAEL HARRINGTON

CAIN AND HUMPHREY — MURRAY KEMPTON

From Malenkov to Khrushchev — JACK RADER

Anxiety in Politics — FRANZ NEUMANN

A Letter to East Europeans — NORMAN MAILER

Changing Status of the Negro — BOB BONE

Asia: Industrialize Democratically? — ASOKA MEHTA

Mr. Trilling and Theodore Dreiser — BERNARD ROSENBERG

Merger and Monopoly in the U. S. — BEN B. SELIGMAN

SPRING 1955 — 75c

DISSENT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The purpose of this magazine is suggested by its name: to dissent from the bleak atmosphere of conformism that pervades the political and intellectual life of the United States: to dissent from the support of the "status quo," now so noticeable on the part of many former radicals and socialists; to dissent from the terrible assumption that a new war is necessary or inevitable.

The accent of DISSENT will be radical. Its tradition will be the tradition of democratic socialism. We shall try to reassert the libertarian values of the socialist ideal, and at the same time, to discuss freely and honestly what in the socialist tradition remains alive and what needs to be discarded or modified. We are, it goes without saying, unalterably opposed to all forms of totalitarianism, both of the Fascist and the Stalinist varieties.

DISSENT is not and does not propose to become a political party or group. On the contrary, its existence is based on an awareness that in America today there is no significant socialist movement and that, in all likelihood, no such movement will appear in the immediate future.

DISSENT will not have any editorial position or statements. Each writer will speak for himself. Our magazine will be open to a wide range of opinion, though naturally our editorial emphasis will be such as to favor those contributions which help reestablish socialist thought and value. At the same time we shall welcome any expression of competent thought or scholarly contributions touching upon our area of interest, even if these dissent from DISSENT.

DISSENT, issued April 1, 1955, is published quarterly by Dissent Publishing Association, 509 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, N. Y. Subscriptions: $2.50 for one year, $4.00 for two years; $2.00 for students for one year; foreign subscriptions, including Canada, $3.00 for one year, $5 for two years. All payments from foreign countries must be made by U. S. money orders or checks payable in U. S. currency. Single copy: $.75.

Copyright 1955 by Dissent Publishing Association. Permission to reprint any article must be obtained from the Publishers. ● Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. ● Entered as second-class matter at the post office at New York, New York on April 1, 1954 under the authority of the act of March 3, 1879. ● Volume II, No. 2 (Whole Number 6).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DISSENT

A QUARTERLY OF SOCIALIST OPINION

VOLUME II
NUMBER 2

Spring 1955

EDITORIAL BOARD

Travers Clement
Lewis Coser
Emanuel Geltman
Irving Howe
Norman Mailer
Stanley Plastrik
Bernard Rosenberg
Meyer Schapiro

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Erich Fromm
Sid Lens
Frank Marquart
A. J. Muste
George Woodcock

CONTENTS

Page

JOURNAL OF THE QUARTER

From Malenkov to Khrushchev —*by Jack Rader* 99
No Time for Silence 100
Germany: Unity and Rearmament—*by H. Brand* 103

ARTICLES

What I Think of Artistic Freedom—*by Norman Mailer* 98
Liberalism—A Moral Crisis
1. The ADA: Vision and Myopia—*by Irving Howe* 107
2. The American Committee for Cultural Freedom — *by Michael Harrington* 113
3. Cain and Humphrey — *by Murray Kempton* 122
The Changing Status of the Negro—*by Bob Bone* 124
Anxiety in Politics — *by Franz Neumann* 133
Merger and Monopoly in the U.S.—*by Ben B. Seligman* 144
Can Asia Industrialize Democratically?—*by Asoka Mehta* 152
American Notebook
1. Problems of Labor Unity—*by S. L.* 163
2. Hollywood, Killer of the Dream—*by Gabriel Gladstone* . 166
Mr. Trilling, Theodore Dreiser and Life in the U.S.—*by Bernard Rosenberg* 171
Sects: A Discussion—*by Emanuel Geltman and Stanley Plastrik* . 179
Lewis Coser *Replies* 183

BOOKS

The Problem of Social Planning *by Theodore Frankel* 185

MISCELLANY

The Public Opinion Detectors—*by Sebastian Frank* 189

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This article has an interesting origin, and may yet have a small history. It was requested of several American writers including myself by Melvin Lasky, editor of "Der Monat" in West Berlin, and there is a chance that Bert Brecht, the playwright and poet now in East Germany, will agree to answer it in the pages of "Der Monat." If this happens, the agreement is that my article will in turn be printed in some East German publication. It is highly unlikely of course but the opportunity was too good to pass by.

Writing it, however, was a little like trying to follow a movie with one's eyes closed for I had very little "sense" or "feeling" of the people who would read it, especially the ones I was most interested in reaching—to wit, those German Stalinists whose faith might be fluttering. Hence the decision to write it the way I did.—N. M.

WHAT I THINK OF ARTISTIC FREEDOM

Norman Mailer

To say anything about "artistic freedom" in a few pages is of course almost impossible. One has the doubtful choice of making a few private remarks or else listing a series of platitudes. If I choose the second procedure it is because the platitude for all its obvious disadvantages has nonetheless a particular advantage we are too likely to forget—in every cliché is buried a truth, and to contemplate a cliché, to explore it, to search for its paradoxes and attempt to resolve them is a most characteristic activity of thought if indeed it is not thought itself, for in a very real sense every word in a language is a small cliché flattening the variety of experience it attempts to illumine. And some words are large clichés, meaningless to some, infinite to others; we need only think of "God," "Life," "Adventure," "Color,"—whichever word one chooses.

There is one further preface I must make. For years I have been alternately attracted to Marxism and Anarchism, and in the tension between the two I suppose I have found the themes for my novels. So I do not write this credo with any idea of being a champion of America or the West. As a practical matter, and one can hardly scorn such an important practical matter, there is more liberty to express unpopular, radical, "useless," or dangerous ideas in the United States than there is in the Soviet Union or the "Eastern Democracies." Nonetheless it is done at one's disadvantage if not one's outright danger, and the advertisers of America's artistic liberties often neglect to mention that our unpopular ideas are invariably buried in tangential newspapers and maga-

continued on page 192

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Journal of the Quarter

FROM MALENKOV TO KHRUSHCHEV

If there is one lesson to be learned from the Malenkov "resignation," it is that most of the journalistic guesses about the *specific* power relations in the Kremlin are utterly fruitless. No one really knows. And if the subject were not so grave, there would be something inexpressibly comic about the "Russian experts" whose expertness consists of little more than a close study of the photographs in *Pravda* and the order in which the names of the Russian rulers are listed.

Amidst the whirl of speculation a few facts might be remembered. The most fundamental is that the unchanging element in recent Russian history has been the concentration of political power in one man or a very small group, a power exercised through a totalitarian party. Nothing that has happened, neither Malenkov's rise nor his fall, can yet be said in any serious way to modify this fact. The fundamental relations of social and political power in Russia remain as they have been for the past two decades.

Yet the questions, unanswerable as they may be, persist: Does the rise of Zhukov and Bulganin mean an increase in the power of the army? Is there, as Secretary Dulles implies, a split between the party and the state, and is the latter now gaining a certain independence? Simply to ask such questions is to realize how difficult it is to answer them—we lack information, we lack the facts. Does, for example, Bulganin represent the army or the party? And how can we be certain, as most of the "Russian experts" seem to be, that the divisions in the Russian ruling circles take place along institutional lines (army vs. party, secret police vs. administrators etc.) rather than along lines which cross, horizontally, the various institutions?

If the most fundamental fact to remember with regard to the Russian state is the high concentration of power in a small ruling group, the next most important fact is the certainty of continued conflict among the power cliques. So that the occasional announcements of changes in major personnel, while in themselves not sufficient for an analysis of *what* or between *whom* this struggle consists of, is clearly evidence that the crisis within the ruling bureaucratic group remains.

The speculation that can probably be dismissed most easily is that of Dulles, which tries to establish some sort of independence in the administrative cadres of the Russian state *vis a vis* the party. Actually, the one constant in all the power struggles is the party, the omnipresent power center which reaches into every corner

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the country—it is this, together with the unprecedented uses of terror and ideology, which marks the distinctive stigmata of the modern totalitarian state. Power in Russia is not primarily economic or military; power resides in *political* control, which means in the party; given an economy that is statified and a society that is totalitarian, it cannot be otherwise. That is not to say that the party and state are in all instances "the same," since some formal and indeed actual distinctions no doubt exist; it is only to assert the dominance of the party in the state, in the economic bureaucracy, in all spheres of culture, communal life and army affairs.

But while the rule of the party is the constant, there have been important changes in Russia since Stalin died. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that tensions and conflicts repressed during Stalin's reign are beginning to break out into the open. A certain fluidity has begun to appear on top of the monolithic structure. The regime remains totalitarian, but the element of personal rule is now reduced and problems that had formerly to wait on Stalin's pleasure can now manifest themselves, as it were, in independent form.

Stalin's heirs did not inherit a happy state of affairs. At his funeral Beria felt called upon to promise a new respect for individual rights. Malenkov promised to provide relief from the long years of austerity and to promote a higher standard of living. The new regime was not yet certain of its popularity; it felt a need to consider that mass response which in a totalitarian country may be repressed but nonetheless exists. Malenkov, Beria and Khrushchev could not rule by personal fiat, as Stalin had. They had to take into account the wishes of their own top circle and, to a certain extent, the managerial and bureaucratic class. There seems to have grown up a profound yearning in all sectors of the population, including the bureaucracy itself, for a relaxation of social tension, a breathing spell from promiscuous terror and a relaxation into what might be called regulated authoritarianism. There was and is a widespread

No Time For Silence

The Federation of Atomic Scientists has issued an appeal to the United Nations to investigate the danger that continued test explosions of the hydrogen bomb may result in unpredictable genetic damage to the human race. This appeal, which has been systematically slighted in the American press, raises a question of the utmost gravity. The Federation is far from being a radical organization; it does not engage in apocalyptic visions with great readiness; if it now speaks out there must surely be the most pressing reasons for fearing that test explosions of the hydrogen bomb *will* do genetic damage.

Surely this is an issue upon which there can be no doubt among those who retain some measure of sanity. That the bombs will explode there can be no doubt; they already have. That bigger bombs will make bigger explosions there can also be no doubt. What purpose, then, is served by the continued policy of the Eisenhower administration of exploding these bombs? What answer does it give to the warning of the Federation of Atomic Scientists?

To remain silent on this issue is to countenance a policy that may come to nothing more than genocide. The warning of the Atomic Scientists should be heeded, the infinitely pointless and infinitely dangerous practice of exploding further bombs should cease!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hunger for more and better food, for diversity and improved quality in all commodities, for less harshness in the conditions of work, for "job security" within the bureaucracy and managerial class, and for more material benefits to the peasantry.

ONE OF THE MAJOR SPECULATIONS about the recent government changes is that Malenkov represented a "soft" policy of greater emphasis on consumer goods, while Khrushchev placed the dominant stress on heavy industry. But there is some reason to doubt that such a cleavage, if it existed, was fundamental. There is more evidence for the view that the new ruling group as a whole shared the general feeling that life had to be relaxed somewhat and more goods made available to the people.

The plenum of the party's central committee heard Khrushchev declare on September 3, 1953 that

> The great successes achieved by the Soviet people in developing socialist industry enable the Communist Party and the Government to get down directly to solving the problem of creating an abundance of articles in popular consumption in our country.

This, be it noted, is not significantly different from what Malenkov was saying. And Khrushchev went on to say that given the state of Russian economy

> There is the practical possibility of organizing a sharp advance by all branches of the light and food industries, of considerably expanding the production of consumer goods, because the *main aim and the chief task* of socialist production is the maximum satisfaction of the constantly rising material and cultural requirements of the whole of society. (Emphasis added.)

But while industry had achieved a condition that would make possible such abundance, the trouble, Khrushchev continued, was the state of agriculture. His report stands out as the first full-scale analysis of the failure of Russian agriculture that has been made public since the beginning of collectivization in the late 1920's. Said Khrushchev:

> A definite disproportion has set in between the rate of growth of our large-scale socialist industry, the urban population and the material well-being of the working masses, on the one hand, and the present state of agricultural production, on the other . . . it suffices to say that from 1940 to 1952, while industrial output increased 2.3 times, total production of agriculture (in comparable prices) rose only 10 percent.

Several steps were proposed to meet the failure of the agricultural sector (which, it need hardly be said, can only be understood in terms of a deeper malaise within the Russian economy itself). There was to be a sharp increase in material incentives to the peasants. The party, becoming still more directly involved in agricultural production, would assume the main burden of improving the backward agricultural areas. And vast new territories in central Asia were to be opened to cultivation.

This latter plan was intended as a means for providing a new granary completely subservient to the state. During 1953 and 1954, it is reported, over 100,000 young Communists were settled in Central Asia. A total of over 100,000,000 acres of land never before put to the plough were now to be seeded. The whole area would be organized on the basis of state farms and "agrocities" and in this vast new effort there would be no need to consider peasant traditions, especially the eternal yearning of the peasant for his own land.

The plan for cultivating Central Asia has deep contradictions of its

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

own, not the least of which are the barrenness of the land and the insistence of the regime on developing it with little if any regard for the people settled there. But in terms of the Russian economy as a whole the plan had the effect, together with the other measures for increasing the agricultural yield, of immediately coming into basic contradiction with the desire to improve the quantity of consumer goods. Incentives to the peasantry would mean that more and better foods would have to remain in the countryside. Greater party responsibility in agriculture, as provided for by Khrushchev's plan, could be exercised largely by control of the tractor and machine stations. In order to "shift the vast army of specialists working in offices to the country-side and to reinforce collective farms, machine and tractor stations and state farms with leading personnel" (Khrushchev), strong measures had to be taken to compel people to take on new hardships and to leave comforts behind them.

Yet—and here we come to still another contradiction in the Russian economy—if agriculture is now to be emphasized after three decades of ruthless stress upon building up heavy industry, one of the major consequences must paradoxically be a renewed emphasis on heavy industry. To mechanize the agricultural sector of the economy; to give the tractor stations a markedly greater quantity of machines and parts; to open the steppes of Central Asia to farming on the scale Khrushchev envisages—is once again to place another major strain upon heavy industry. And this, in turn, means to cut down on the production of consumers goods, to continue the regime of austerity and therefore the harsh political climate.

Readers familiar with modern Russian history will recognize that this is a problem which had already appeared in the Twenties and Thirties. In fact, it has been the fundamental problem of Russian economy and it remains unsolved despite the movement toward industrialization. Nor does any solution appear in sight. The contradictions between agriculture and industry, between traditional Russian backwardness and its overlay of modern technology, these are still operative. What is more, every step toward a solution seems only to exacerbate them.

TWO OTHER FACTORS MAKING FOR CRISIS in the Russian bureaucracy may at least be mentioned. The first is the problem of Russo-Chinese relations. The Russians, particularly in view of impending German rearmament, count heavily on their alliance with the Chinese; they have to. China's greatest need is industrialization, and the Mao regime turns to Russia for the necessary capital, machinery and technicians. But in order to participate in so vast an effort as the industrialization of China, the Russian regime must turn back toward the traditional Stalinist policy of emphasizing heavy industry at home and must abandon, in large measure, its earlier plan for a certain increase in the production of consumer goods.

And then there is the obvious factor of the atomic armaments race. To try to keep up with the United States in the production of atomic and hydrogen bombs can only place the heaviest burdens on the Russian economy—still another deterrent to the policy of increasing consumer goods.

If this sketchy analysis of the Russian situation has any validity at all, several things follow. The shake-up

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the ruling bureaucracy was not primarily one between two conflicting groups with a clear-cut programmatic difference (heavy vs. consumer industry). It followed from the basic contradictions within the Russian totalitarian system—a crisis which beset the ruling bureaucracy *as a whole,* and which led, in traditional Stalinist fashion, to the sacrifice of one part of the bureaucracy by another. The crisis is not merely or even primarily due to a conflict of view as to whether the Russian regime should stress "coexistence" or a more aggressive international policy. It is an *organic* social crisis, and one, we would suggest, that is almost certainly insoluble within the context of a totalitarian society.

Which leads us to our final point. Just as a few decades ago there was a tendency to accept the fearful idea that Hitler's regime might really last a thousand years, so there has recently been a noticeable tendency to assume the immutable existence of the totalitarian regime in Russia. Half in fear and half in thinly veiled admiration, some writers have begun to envisage a constant, unimpeded improvement of Russian life under the auspices of a benevolent autocracy. This vision the facts have now shattered. So long as the Russian system remains what it is, crisis will follow upon crisis—and in a total society each crisis tends quickly to assume a total form. No more than capitalism can the world of Stalinism achieve social stability; in the very process of expansion it creates possibilities and tendencies toward its own destruction. JACK RADER

GERMANY: UNITY AND REARMAMENT

As this is being written, Bonn's parliament is voting for German rearmament. This caps the policy of "restoration" pursued during recent years by the U.S. in Western Europe; at the same time it introduces additional elements of rigidity not merely into German society but into the complex of European relationships as well. The new army, by its very existence, will sharpen the parochial nationalisms of Western Europe, and thus accentuate its inner rivalries. It will exert strong pressures on domestic policies for it constitutes not so much a potential danger as a factor of immense power, hence a competitive challenge impossible to evade. This must clearly limit whatever elements of fluidity, whatever "elbow room" still remains in West European society and politics.

Though on the face of it the ratification of the Paris agreements by Bonn fulfills the conditions by which Germany is to regain full sovereignty, in actuality, Germany will be less, not more free. For its new army will not be the freely disposable instrument of Bonn used on behalf of an independent foreign policy; rather, it will be an adjunct to the U.S. military apparatus. It will be useful in policing Central and perhaps Western Europe and in denying to the Russians the great industrial resources of the area; useful also in supplementing the manpower of NATO—but it is not to be regarded as more than a junior partner in America's military enterprise.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There have been expressions of anxiety over the possibility that this new army will enable the Germans to turn against NATO and pursue a "pro-Russian" policy. However, there are a number of safeguards in the covenants which place considerable obstacles in the way of such independent policy changes on the part of the Germans—if indeed the latter would regard them as desirable. First, the new army will have a base of continental supplies incomparably narrower than that of its predecessors, and for this reason alone must depend upon the Allied navies. Secondly, strong Allied contingents will remain at its side, and "absolute" (atomic and bacteriological) weapons will not be available to its command. These two factors strictly limit its bargaining power with *either* side.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EDC and the Paris agreements was hardly more than a difference in legal techniques, important though these were in veiling the true loci of actual and potential power. EDC was a diplomatic attempt at introducing German rearmament without endangering the French-American alliance. However, this is not to question Adenauer's and Schuman's sincerity in devising a French-German rapprochement, with EDC as the shaky initial basis of a *future* alliance of West European Catholicism. Whatever the merits and perils of such a policy, the alternative to it was and is fraught with grave dangers to the Adenauer regime.

A West German army, free from contractual obligations to EDC, means that a new center of an *unambiguously internal* authority is created, which, with the intensified international tensions bound to arise therefrom, will inevitably erode and replace the power of this regime. In addition, the issue of German unity will assume new and sharper proportions; it is bound to become a central issue of domestic agitation.

The unity issue has frequently been minimized, either as having no "practical" significance for the prosperous West Germans, or as lacking any genuine basis in the sentiments of a "fragmented" people. Such views mistake transient phenomena for permanent characteristics; they also represent more or less blunt rationalizations of U.S. policy. The latter has actively and consistently opposed unity—though it has never denied its "abstract" desirability—because a nonmilitarized but unified Germany would swiftly become the focus of "neutralism" in Europe, hence of policies aimed at resurrecting Europe's independent world position. This would introduce the kind of unwelcome complexities into the calculations of American strategists which, for example, India has such a disagreeable knack of raising. To prevent the formation of *independent* political blocs is a primary objective of the U.S. in this period.

Once the new German army is a reality, the forces of restoration in Germany will be secured by their *own* armed power; this will greatly enhance their prestige and authority, so that unity, if achieved, will have social and political implications fundamentally different from those which a unification brought about by a combination of political agitation and negotiations would have had. The first mentioned road to unity not only fastens a reactionary regime upon the German people, aggravating internal tensions and facilitating Stalinist in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

roads; but the presence of a growing army cannot long be tolerated by the Russians nor can this army itself evade the duty with which all modern armies are charged, *viz.* to guard or recoup the nation's "integrity." The second road to unity, on the other hand, would tend to identify the democratic forces in Germany with the indisputable legitimate national aspirations of the German people (an identification which seems so necessary for the success of democracy in modern times); more than that, the social and political appeal of *this* kind of struggle might have an effect in the satellites and in Russia itself.

The simultaneous appearance of remilitarization and the unity as major issues may not have been the deliberate aim of Adenauer or the U.S., but that some such conjunction would develop was not difficult to foresee; and that it has so developed stands as the most severe political indictment of both. This particular consequence of U.S. policy is due entirely to its overwhelmingly *military* character, which induces its spokesmen to secure the status quo of social and political reaction, and thus gives it an essentially anti-democratic stamp.

BUT THE QUESTION MAY BE RAISED whether the second road to unity sketched above was or is a *practical* alternative, whether the forces to carry it out exist—whether an *independent* German policy was ever conceivable.

To this no unqualified answer is possible. America's policy of restoration in Western Europe has brought a measure of stability and prosperity which may not have been attainable otherwise—but at the price of social and political stagnation. In Germany, as in other countries, this stagnation manifests itself not so much in the fact that the official political and labor leaderships have themselves fallen victim to it, but that no serious challenge to this leadership has as yet anywhere arisen. Hundreds of anti-rearmament strikes and demonstrations have occurred in West Germany, codetermination as well as simpler economic issues continue to provoke considerable unrest—all these attest to the strength of popular democratic forces. But while new leaders have appeared, they are quickly absorbed into the existing labor bureaucracy; cadres of leaders, groups of men around whom movements initially crystallize—these quasi-spontaneous formations, which always betoken the organic health of a society, do not appear to exist.

German labor, and specifically the Social Democratic Party (SDP), finds itself in the unenviable position of being, on one side, threatened by the steady encroachment of the State, with its multifarious regulatory bodies; and on the other by Stalinism. Audacious extra-parliamentary actions, fresh organizational approaches, realistic programmatic lines—all these are exposed not only to the normal dangers of official repression, but to Stalinist infiltration and manipulation as well, and this vastly increases the risks.

But an objective appraisal of the risks cannot remove the need for taking them. Though the policy of the SDP cannot be analyzed here in detail, it may suffice to note that the SDP has never gone on record as opposing rearmament. Disregarding realities, it claims that rearmament could have been effected "democratically." Moreover, while its spokesmen have shown their awareness of the strategic nonsense of a "defense" of West Germany they have never yet been cour-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ageous or consistent enough to use this argument effectively. Nor has the SDP leadership tried to think through the political implications of the East Berlin uprising, which it viewed with ill-concealed dismay; and its approach to the question of unity is exhausted by repetitious calls for a Big Four Conference, the preconditions and likely results of which it never analyzes. Its press is full of dreary details of economic and administrative problems, and of breast-beating democratic proclamations. Its policy, its stale and cautious approach and its top-heavy internal structure render it incapable of assuming the risks of independent action.

As already indicated, popular forces do exist which oppose rearmament and are willing to struggle for peaceful unification. Whether and to what extent these forces will mold their own leadership and institutions—this is still an open question. It is unlikely that at this late stage they can effectively oppose rearmament, but it is not improbable that their own development will be accelerated by the growing strength of the Right. In a sense, the internal situation will again become paramount for the Germans—though for how long, no one can tell—presenting issues manageable to some degree at least on the plane of *internal* politics and hence offering possibilities to the democratic forces. They will have a chance to sharpen their ideas, to hammer out their own "rearmament" —this is the only good one can hope for in the present circumstances.

H. BRAND

You can still help

In our Autumn issue, we asked our readers to contribute $6,000 in order to assure DISSENT's appearance for 1955 and 1956. A total of over $4,500 in cash and pledges has come in to date. This means that DISSENT will just manage to survive without any additional fund appeals *if*:

a) All pledges are promptly redeemed (don't make us waste our precious pennies reminding you of your pledges); b) Our regular income from subscriptions and sales rises in proportion to the past year; c) Our expenses do not mount unexpectedly, and we continue to practice the same Spartan economy we have until now.

We are grateful to all who have helped. It is a pleasure to know that we will probably not have to ask for additional contributions until the fall of 1956. But if you want to be sure of this—and more important, to be sure the magazine lives and thrives—you can do the following:

Subscribe for your friends . . . Be sure your local library subscribes . . . Urge your local bookdealer to carry DISSENT (see back cover) . . . Renew your own subscription.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LIBERALISM — A MORAL CRISIS

1. The ADA: Vision and Myopia

Irving Howe

By one of those neat coincidences that sometimes illuminate political life, former Senator Harry Cain launched a powerful criticism of the government's "security" program at the very moment the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) was opening its recent convention in Washington. The irony was irresistible. As one sat through the sessions, watching these representative American liberals in a painful effort to reconcile their genuine concern for civil liberties with their yearning to prove themselves "responsible," that is to say, respectable, it almost seemed as if Cain had read Murray Kempton's biting comparison (see page 122) between himself and Senator Humphrey, the ADA darling, and had decided again to embarrass official American liberalism by showing how much bolder he, a life-long conservative, could be than the ADA. If so, he succeeded. Nothing the ADA did or said had the forthrightness and sharpness of Cain's outburst.

I

In some important ways the ADA convention was impressive. Most of the delegates were extremely well-informed about daily political life; they knew, for example, as I shamefacedly confess I did not, that the Butler bill was a proposal to extend "loyalty" checks to large areas of American industry. They were people who had worked in their localities for better schools and houses, and had worked to some effect. Intellectuals impatient with such "small" matters or radicals grown accustomed to their isolation may condescend to such people; but if so, at some peril to themselves.

In the main, the ADA delegates struck me as *good* people. Earnest though not very sophisticated, they had a saving touch of the idealism many of the more knowing ex-radicals have lost. The convention atmosphere was notable for a tolerance and decency of manner. One might criticize a procedure that gave excessive weight to panels of prechosen "experts" who tended to overawe the ranks with "the inside dope"; but given these limits, people spoke freely and were heard out attentively.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Best of all, most ADA people seemed genuinely concerned and disturbed about the problem of civil liberties. The *formal* positions they adopted often suffered from ambiguity and double-tracking, but the delegates were better than the resolutions.

If the discussions seldom rose to precision or coherence, there was, by way of compensation, little of that corrosive cynicism, that absence of passion with regard to anything but anti-Stalinism, which has become characteristic of certain sections of the more "advanced" intellectual world. Before coming to Washington I had wondered whether it would be possible to distinguish between the pure-and-simple liberals in ADA and those who are ex-radicals of one or another sort. At first I couldn't, but as I grew accustomed to the pulpy and liberal-lawyerish rhetoric which ADAers employ I began to notice that whenever one of them called for a more "sophisticated"—by which he meant a less intransigeant—stand on civil liberties, he was likely to be an ex-radical. By comparison, the ordinary home-grown liberals often seemed fresh and trustworthy.

II

As soon, however, as even the mildest intellectual standards are brought to bear, the results prove depressing. What struck one most of all in listening to the ADA people was their utter lack of self-reflectiveness. They were so lost in an endless labyrinth of political *items,* so absorbed in drawing up planks on every theme from tariff reform to Alaskan statehood, so entirely focused on legislative particularities, that they never troubled to ask themselves any fundamental questions regarding their political identity. Either they indulged in woolly rhetoric (and anyone who thinks that socialists are prone to grand clichés should listen to the liberals!) or they fretted minor points; but they did not seem aware that the very *idea* of liberalism, like the idea of conservatism or of radicalism, might be in crisis. The atmosphere of the ADA might best have been described as one of worried complacence, with many of its members downright impatient before the prospect of intellectual reflection. Nor was the leadership superior to the ranks; the only ADA leader who tried to rise to a level of articulate generalization was the economist Robert Nathan, who made some interesting though preliminary remarks on the problems of Asia. Perhaps, however, Mr. Schlesinger reserves his ideas for other occasions.

It was remarkable that the delegates could deplore so many specific violations of freedom in America without asking themselves whether these formed part of some larger trend—a trend, say, toward a bureaucratic-garrison state? Numerous economic proposals were discussed, yet the fundamental question of the relationship between our prosperity and the war economy was never investigated. Communism was denounced with ritual regularity, but what this monstrous danger in Asia or Europe is, how it gathers strength and why it wins the loyalty of millions, no one tried to say. The need for economic aid to Asia was constantly stressed, but whether such aid would be meaningful in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the present context of U. S. alignment with the reactionary Asian governments no one thought to ask.

To be sure, one could not realistically expect profundities at a convention of this sort, but *some* effort at historical perspective, *some* readiness to stand back from the kitchen-midden of daily politics and engage in theoretical inquiry, was surely possible. As it was, the convention, like the ADA itself, came to seem a prime example of how fanatical the anti-fanaticism, how ideological the anti-ideology of *real politik* can become.

Even more troubling than the absence of general ideas was the kind of willed "collective amnesia" with which the ADA tried to cover its embarrassments. Time after time it denounced elements of present-day political life—e.g., the use of the Attorney-General's "subversive list" without the right to hearings or review; yet it failed to notice that these practices of the Eisenhower administration had actually begun under the New and Fair Deals for which it expressed so deep a nostalgia.

In a banquet speech, the ADA leader Telford Taylor argued that wire-tapping, while extremely distasteful, should not be unconditionally outlawed, since a) it sometimes might be put to good purposes; b) no one seemed interested in enforcing the present law prohibiting it; c) even so notable an ADA leader as Francis Biddle, when he was Attorney General, had permitted its use and had, indeed, been the first to employ it on a large scale. Since, continued the ingenuous Mr. Taylor, even a liberal like Biddle had used wire-tapping, it was clearly impractical to abolish it. One could only hold one's head and wonder whether some alert member of ADA might not go so far as to reverse the argument: if wire-tapping is objectionable and Francis Biddle had been the first to employ it, might that not cast a shadow on Biddle's liberalism?

Most revealing of all was the tragi-comedy of ADA with respect to Senator Humphrey. During its main afternoon session, the convention had voted to urge repeal of those sections of "the Smith Act and the Communist Control Act of 1954" which "limit the right of free speech, free association and free political expression." The joker in this formulation I shall discuss later; suffice it here to notice that the convention did criticize these two laws in terms of essential equivalence. Why then is the first specified by the name of its author in Congress, while the second is given its formal and, as it were, anonymous title? Because Smith was a Southern Democrat, with regard to whom the ADA is positively fearless, while "the Communist Control Act of 1954" was introduced by Senator Humphrey, the ADA's own beamish boy. Throughout the discussion of this matter not one delegate rose to mention the simple but explosive fact known to everyone in the room: that "the Communist Control Act of 1954" was the shame of the liberals in Congress.

That very evening the ADA held its convention banquet, and the toastmaster was . . . Senator Humphrey. Except for Humphrey himself, who passed it all off with a wise-crack, no one seemed even faintly troubled by the fact that only a few hours earlier the ADA had directed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what was, after all, a fundamental criticism of his Congressional behavior. The praise heaped on him at the banquet was lavish; he emerged as little less than a hero. Well, every political movement has a skeleton rattling in some closet, but not many care to display it at the very center of the dais.*

III

The main discussions of the convention were divided into three groups: "political, foreign and domestic policy." It would be tedious to report these in detail, since most of them consisted merely of formal reiterations. One apparently important change took place with regard to political policy, where the ADA, stung by the charge that it is nothing more than an auxiliary to the Democrats, adopted language to suggest a greater independence from both parties. But in practice this will not come to very much. Given the ADA rejection of any third party perspective and the very dim possibility of such a perspective becoming important in American politics during the next several years, the liberals really have no alternative to their frequently disillusioning relationship with the Democratic Party. Nor does it particularly matter that this relationship causes discomfort to some ADA leaders. Having followed for some years a course of alliance with the Democrats and having helped undercut six or seven years ago the possibilities for a new party, the ADA is now frozen in its familiar political course. In this sense, people like Senator Humphrey have the ADA over a barrel: they know they can do or say almost anything and still be sure of its support.

In the area of foreign policy, many of the specific suggestions and criticisms made by the convention make good sense. But here again one is struck by the dogged and shallow "pragmatism" of the liberal mind. *The ADA was ready to challenge a good many manifestations of U.S. foreign policy, but never so much as to question its underlying assumptions.* The convention called for a withdrawal from the commitment to "defend" Matsu and Quemoy; it proposed a UN trusteeship for Formosa, to be followed by a plebiscite as a step toward Formosan self-determination. As a way of extricating the U.S. from its impossible position in Asia and of avoiding the danger of war, this is about as good a proposal as anyone is likely to offer. But one would think that at least a few of the ADA delegates might have troubled to relate the present debacle to the whole U.S. policy of supporting Chiang Kai-shek, even if such an inquiry did involve the embarrassment of having to question the foreign policies of both the Roosevelt and Truman administrations.

* The impression Humphrey makes—I had never seen him before—is thoroughly disagreeable. He is slick, cheaply clever, patently opportunistic. Senator Morse, who also spoke, struck one by the extent of his intellectual limitations, but he is obviously a sincere man. Humphrey, by contrast, rings false. He has all the natural equipment of a demagogue, and it astonishes me that the leaders of ADA, at least some of whom are intelligent and sensitive men, do not feel or express their discomfort at his being taken for their major spokesman in Congress.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A mild controversy developed over the problem of admitting the Mao regime into the UN. So far as I could tell, there was considerable subterranean sentiment for immediate admission, but the anxiety, shared by both leaders and delegates, that such a stand would open the ADA to a smear led the convention to the meaningless gesture of proposing that China be admitted to the UN after it had shown its readiness to live up to the provisions of the UN charter—as if membership in the UN implied any sort of moral sanction.

It needs only be added that no support whatever was found in the convention for a resolution introduced by one lonely young delegate urging that the ADA, in the name of preserving humanity, advocate the immediate cessation of hydrogen bomb tests. Apparently overawed by his isolation on this issue, or perhaps by the argument that "we must preserve our flexibility in foreign policy," the delegate accepted an amendment urging the creation of an international commission to study the genetic hazards of the hydrogen bomb tests. Thus, in an utterly empty gesture, was everyone's conscience appeased, and without the painful necessity of saying anything. After all, there are some impetuosities to which American liberalism simply cannot be forced!

IV

It was only in the discussion of domestic policy, and particularly of civil liberties, that one began to sense the inner strains of the ADA, its actual impulses as distinct from its formal policies. And while I do not generally favor the use of psychological terms for political matters, it is hard not to describe the behavior of the convention with regard to civil liberties as profoundly schizoid.

Most of the delegates clearly wanted to take a strong stand in favor of civil liberties. Yet they felt that, as "responsible" liberals, they had to be moderate, they had to consider problems of "security" . . . The result was a dizzying rhythm, one step forward, one step backward. Two examples:

● "We propose," said the convention resolution, "repealing statutory provisions which limit the right of free speech, free association and free political expression, such as are contained in the Smith Act and the Communist Control Act of 1954." This seems excellent on the face of it, but read the sentence again and you will see that it is *not* a forthright proposal to repeal these two pieces of obnoxious legislation. The resolution urges only the repeal of certain sections in these laws, but fails to specify which, *if any*, sections do not limit free speech, free association, etc.

● "We oppose," said the convention resolution, "limiting the right to advocate unpopular political proposals, including communist ideas." Splendid! But then the convention accepted an amendment eliminating the phrase, "including communist ideas"—which simply meant to take the teeth out of the sentence. For surely it is "communist ideas," and not vegetarian or Swedenborgian ones, that are presently at stake.

So it went, one item after another: resounding general statements

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in behalf of civil liberties, with little qualifying clauses that emasculated them.

Over each of these items, however, there were disagreements and sometimes disputes. But only when the convention reached the problem of academic freedom, and particularly a proposal by a delegate that "refusal to testify under the Fifth or First Amendment, *or membership in any organization* should not be automatic grounds to disqualify a teacher," did the latent disagreements in the ADA come to sharp expression. The youth affiliate, Students for Democratic Action, worked hard for the above-quoted proposal; and an excited discussion broke out. The proposal was defeated, but by so narrow a margin (131 votes to 117) that it represented a moral victory for the youth and for what I would call, rather hesitantly and imprecisely, the "left wing" in the convention. By "left wing" I don't at all mean any sharply formulated tendency, but rather an impulse to desire a more militant expression of ADA policy *within* the boundaries of liberalism. This desire was inchoate and very poorly articulated, but it was unquestionably there—and it represents a hope within the organization.

Yet it would be misleading to suggest that any significant number of delegates was indifferent to the problem of civil liberties. Rather is the point to be made that the impulse to liberalism is today increasingly entangled with an impulse to "responsibility." Between those ADAers trying to live down their radical pasts and those playing it safe for a possible future as Washington brain-trusters—not to mention the largest group of all, those liberals caught in a sincere dilemma between what they call "freedom" and "security"—not much boldness or militancy is forthcoming. Numerous delegates would qualify their remarks on civil liberties with the reminder that the ADA was a "responsible" organization—to the point where one found oneself wishing that someone had gotten up and, with gay "irresponsibility," made a speech in behalf of civil liberties, period.

ONE THING SHOULD BE CLEAR. I am not engaged in the game of berating the liberals for not being socialists; almost every criticism that has been made of the ADA is a criticism within the *possibilities* of liberalism. There are, to be sure, differences of a fundamental kind between liberals and socialists, differences which cannot be skimmed over and which are likely to become more, rather than less, significant with the passage of time. But the sad truth is that within the next few years the problem of civil liberties, if it is to be met at all, will have to be met primarily by the liberals, for it is they rather than the socialists who will be in a position to take decisive action against the gradual erosion of freedom in this country. The burden of responsibility they will therefore have to carry is very great—nothing less, at a time when they are beset and tempted by every conformist pressure, than to remain faithful to the best in their own tradition.

At this point it may be useful to recall an old Hasidic story: "Before his death, Rabbi Zusya said, 'In the coming world, they will not ask

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me, 'Why were you not Moses?' They will ask me, 'Why were you not Zusya?'" In its demands upon the liberals, we may assume, heaven will be similarly modest. But it is a modesty that is also profoundly exacting.

2. The Committee for Cultural Freedom

Michael Harrington

That the American Committee for Cultural Freedom is a grouping of some significance in our intellectual life, is not to be disputed. Its well-publicized statements are often taken as the quasi-official opinion of intellectual liberalism. It counts among its members, most notably on its masthead, the names of many intellectuals with a long history of devotion to cultural freedom. Nonetheless, this organization has recently suffered—and so far as one can determine, continues to suffer—a severe political crisis on the very issue of cultural freedom which is its presumable reason for existence. The immediate occasion for this crisis we shall describe later; for the moment we need only say that it concerns statements by its leading officials so compromising to any libertarian spirit that a number of prominent ACCF members have publicly protested. Behind this immediate crisis, however, lurk the larger problems that beset those American intellectuals who are sincerely devoted to cultural freedom yet are simultaneously involved with a politics that prods them to qualify, weaken and sometimes even negate this devotion.

I

Though it had a previous embryonic existence, the American Committee established itself after an International Congress for Cultural Freedom held in Berlin in June 1950. This meeting was attended by intellectuals from 21 countries and was followed by the formation of national groups. The basis of the international organization was a manifesto signed by a wide spectrum of intellectuals, from Ignazio Silone to Sidney Hook, from David Rousset to Jacques Maritain. Consisting primarily of rhetorical affirmations of freedom, the politics of this statement were as unexceptionable as they were vague, save perhaps for a sideswipe against "neutralism."

The International Committee was conceived as a kind of "united front." Answering the question "whether a real collaboration between Socialists and right-wing parties is possible or desirable," it declared: "This collaboration is desirable if its objectives are limited to the task of uniting each free nation against threats to its freedom from within and without and thus acting as a deterrent against aggression."

Now the concept of the "united front" has an honorable as well as a dishonorable past. Almost always it has served a useful purpose

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only when it led to various groups or individuals acting in common for delimited ends while not pretending to dissolve their larger differences. Nor is there any reason why a "united front" in defense of cultural freedom should not be possible and useful—provided, however, that there is a clear understanding as to how cultural freedom can be defended. The statement of the International Committee, one quickly notices, does not provide such understanding; once "the task of uniting each free nation" is raised, the inevitable divisions of politics must come into play or be unhealthily suppressed. The statement—we do not propose to worry this one sentence too much, except for its *symptomatic* bearing—skirts the obvious fact that within the "limitation" it proposes there remains unanswered every question of *how* to oppose Stalinism.

That the point I am making is urgent can immediately be seen by comparing the American Committee and its European counterparts. In the United States the ACCF assumed that the positive task of defending cultural freedom could be achieved primarily through uniting almost every variety of anti-Stalinist. Anti-Stalinism--crude, promiscuous and often without positive content—became the magic talisman of intellectual respectability, and the result was a curiously ambiguous definition of cultural freedom. The European Committees have been more concerned with a living day-to-day defense of intellectual freedom and have retained a greater degree of political independence *vis a vis* their own governments. By contrast, the American Committee has enthusiastically laid itself open to the pressures and shaping influences of State Department policies and rationales; so that often it has been less an organization devoted to the defense of cultural freedom than an agency propagandizing the American party line. This, in turn, has led to exercises in what might be called intellectual colonialism. For example, it sent James Burnham on a tour in India, with the intention, no doubt, of having that noted libertarian explain the meaning of cultural freedom to the benighted Indian intellectuals.

II

The Berlin manifesto was signed by Arthur Schlesinger Jr.—and James Burnham; by James T. Farrell—and Robert Montgomery. This hodge-podge was to prove characteristic of the inner tension and confusion in the American Committee. When one undercuts its formal pronouncements and examines its actual preoccupations, it becomes clear that anti-Stalinism of the most indiscriminate kind was the only essential requirement for membership. Else how account for the recent election to its Executive Committee of Whittaker Chambers? Or for the membership of that distinguished thinker and defender of freedom, Victor Riesel? Or for the fact that until quite recently such McCarthyite or near McCarthyite intellectuals as James Burnham and George Schuyler found it possible to work side by side with Sidney Hook? A committee that could retain such figures (not to mention Max Eastman, John Chamberlain and John dos Passos) could hardly be expected to bristle with alertness before the dangers to liberty in the United States, no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

matter how sensitive it was to the threat from several thousand miles away.

Given the presence of McCarthyite supporters in the Committee,* it was almost inevitable that the boast—"we have not allowed this overriding menace [of Stalinism] to blind us to the injustices on our doorsteps"—would be understood in extremely broad fashion. The Committee lists the following as points open to legitimate disagreement among its members:

> Was Communism an opinion or a conspiracy? Is there a right to a government job, which even Communists and other totalitarians could claim? Was the fact that a teacher was a Communist to be regarded as professional disqualification or not? What about "guilt by association"? Was the Smith Act a violation of civil liberties? What restrictions could legitimately be placed upon individual freedom in the interests of national security? What was the nature of totalitarianism, of democracy, of liberty?

Obviously, these are questions concerning which honest men can disagree. For a discussion group they would provide an excellent agenda. But such a disagreement can hardly be the basis for common action, even for the limited aim of opposition to Stalinism. The *kind* of anti-Stalinism which follows from supporting the Smith Act, or even from supporting it with numerous qualifications as Sidney Hook does, is fundamentally different from that which follows from condemning the Smith Act. And the problem becomes all the more exacerbated when the announced objective of an organization is not merely opposition to Stalinism (that comes pretty cheap these days!) but rather a positive defense of cultural freedom. What has happened in practice is that the American Committee *has* taken on a political coloration: it has steadily drifted to the right, toward the position of conforming to and apologizing for the intellectual atmosphere in the United States; and this, in turn, must obviously mute its defense of cultural freedom.

III

In practice the ACCF has fallen behind Sidney Hook's views on civil liberties. Without implying any "conspiracy" theory of history (or even of intellectual intrigue), one may safely say that it is Hook who has molded the decisive ACCF policies. His *Heresy Yes, Conspiracy No* articles were widely circulated by the Committee, which meant that in effect it endorsed his systematic, explicit efforts to minimize the threat to civil liberties and to attack those European intellectuals who, whatever their own political or intellectual deficiencies, took a dim view of American developments. Under the guidance of Hook and the leadership of Irving Kristol, who supported Hook's general outlook, the American Committee cast its weight not so much in defense of those civil liberties which were steadily being nibbled away, but rather against those few remaining fellow-travelers who tried to exploit the civil liberties issue.

* Who were invited, incidentally, with far greater frequency and cordiality than the intellectuals of the anti-Stalinist left.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At times this had an almost comic aspect. When Irving Kristol was Executive Secretary of the ACCF, one learned to expect from him silence on those issues that were agitating the whole intellectual and academic world, and enraged communiques on the outrages performed by people like Arthur Miller or Bertrand Russell in exaggerating the danger to civil liberties in the U.S.

Inevitably, this led to more serious problems. In an article by Kristol, which first appeared in *Commentary* and was later circulated under the ACCF imprimatur, one could read such astonishing and appalling statements as "there is one thing the American people know about Senator McCarthy: he, like them, is unequivocally anti-Communist. About the spokesmen for American liberalism, they feel they know no such thing. And with some justification." This, in the name of defending cultural freedom! As someone remarked, the Committee might better have renamed itself the American Committee for Cultural Accommodation.

We are not, to be sure, dealing with a black-and-white matter. In a number of cases the Committee has acted within the United States in defense of freedom. It protested to Attorney General Brownell on the treatment of Chaplin and Arthur Miller; it was active in the Muhlenberg College case where some Chaplin films were banned; it criticized the procedure of the McCarthy investigation of the Voice of America. The Committee also claims to have done good work in ways precluding publicity, and there is no reason to doubt this claim. Currently, it is intervening in the case of Barry Miller, a former member of the Politics Club of the University of Chicago to whom the army refuses an honorable discharge because of his past (anti-Stalinist) associations.

But these activities do not absorb the main attention or interest of the Committee: its leadership is too jaded, too imbued with the sourness of indiscriminate anti-Stalinism to give itself to an active struggle against the dominant trend of contemporary intellectual life in America. What it *really* cares about most is a struggle against fellow-travelers and "neutralists"—that is, against many European intellectuals; but it fails to see that even in terms of such an objective, it could be effective only if it fought with vigor and passion against the violations of freedom that have mounted up in the U.S., instead of querulously minimizing their extent and gravity.

One of the crippling assumptions of the Committee has been that it would not intervene in cases where Stalinists or accused Stalinists were involved. It has rested this position on the academic argument, advanced most systematically by Sidney Hook, that Stalinists, being enemies of democracy, have no "right" to democratic privileges and that, consequently, no threat to civil liberties or cultural freedom is involved when they are deprived of these privileges. But the actual problem is not the metaphysical one of whether enemies of democracy (as the Stalinists clearly are) have a "right" to democratic privileges. What matters is that the drive against cultural freedom and civil liberties takes on the guise of anti-Stalinism. Thus, for example, such an outrage as depriving

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the veteran anti-Stalinist radical Max Shachtman of a passport with which to travel in Europe—a State Department act one may assume the ACCF would not approve of—is made possible or at least much easier by the precedents created in prosecutions and persecutions of the Stalinists. Given such facts, it becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, to defend civil liberties without clearly defending the civil rights of Stalinists (which has nothing whatever to do with spies or sabotage). And this the Committee has failed to do.

But it has gone even further. In December 1952 it published a "Memorandum on the Visa Problem." This document was concerned with the entry of foreign intellectuals, trade unionists, etc., into the United States. The cases which gave rise to the Memorandum were, of course, those of anti-Stalinists. In the course of the analysis, Section 212 (a) (28) of the McCarran Act, which bars visas strictly on the basis of political criteria, is discussed.

In this discussion the Committee assumes as a matter of course that it is perfectly legitimate to bar Stalinists (or members of the Communist Party) from visas. There are recommendations for exceptions, for a sophisticated use of criteria, in the case of Stalinist front members, but the assumption is always that the mere holding of Stalinist *opinions* is automatically a sufficient ground for refusing a visa. The Committee objects, on the ground of vagueness, to a definition for exclusion based on adherence to "economic, international, and governmental doctrines of world Communism or . . . of any other form of totalitarianism." It finds "adequate," however, criterion for exclusion of those who "advocate or teach or who are members or affiliated with any organization" that advocates or teaches the "violent overthrow" of the government. In effect, thereby, the Committee proposes its own version of the Smith Act, and abandons the long-standing and honorable position of American liberalism that such phrases as "violent overthrow," besides being vague and misleading, are insufficient grounds for political discrimination.

This curious defense of cultural freedom is capped with an even more curious statement:

> We know that the visa problem was not created by arbitrary malice on the part of Congressmen or State Department officials. It is but one reflection, and not by far the largest, of the stresses and strains which this free country is suffering as a result of its determination to resist Communist totalitarianism.

As a piece of apologetics this statement is fantastic. As a description of reality it is far more accurate with regard to the stresses and strains within the Committee itself than within the United States.

IV

Perhaps the most important—certainly the most scandalous—incident revealing the inner bent and bias of the Committee has occurred

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quite recently. In the December 27, 1954 issue of *The New Republic* there appeared, under the pseudonym of Brian Gilbert, a discussion of the Lattimore case. In the February 14, 1955 issue, Sol Stein, Executive Director of the ACCF, came to the defense of Cultural Freedom in a long communication that is certain to become a classic document for the history of the collapse of American liberalism. This document, which contains an endorsement of the McCarran Committee, was given the approval of the executive of the ACCF.

Mr. Stein's first point verges on the incredible. He writes:

> If Mr. Gilbert's article expressed his displeasure with the perjury case now pending against Owen Lattimore, readers may question the propriety of such interference with judicial process and the appropriateness of such pressures upon a judge and jurors who will have to maintain objectivity in weighing the answers.

This statement, let it be remembered, appears in a context of a long juridical and extra-juridical harassment of Lattimore—and to deplore this harassment in no way depends upon any sympathy with Lattimore's opinions. Had there not been public discussion of the case, it is very possible that the vast "pressures" from the right that were quietly exerted might well have succeeded. Yet, in defense of Cultural Freedom, Mr. Stein begins with the suggestion that such cases are not a proper subject of discussion. He then proceeds to discuss them.

(In passing: Mr. Stein's concern for the sanctity of juridical processes does not seem to have kept the ACCF-sponsored book, *McCarthy and the Communists*, by Rorty and Decter, from several times characterizing Lattimore as a "skillful, effective and influential party-lining propagandist." This statement is, of course, substantially in agreement with one of the counts of the perjury indictment against Lattimore. If one accepted Mr. Stein's notions about what is proper to discuss, the Rorty-Decter book could thus be read as an attempt to exert "pressures upon judge and jurors.")

In another section of his communication, Mr. Stein writes:

> Congressional committees, however, when they function responsibly, perform a valuable service in furnishing the public with evaluated information concerning the work of apologists and agents of the Soviet Union who *have not—or cannot be proven to have—broken* existing laws." (My emphasis—M. H.)

Perhaps the most extreme of the current interpretations of powers of Congressional committees claims the right of exposing general "situations." But Mr. Stein, speaking for the cause of Cultural Freedom, goes further and suggests a competence to deal with "apologists" (not, mind you, spies or saboteurs: simply apologists!) who "have not—or cannot be proven to have—broken existing laws." The remainder of his communication, a crass and vindictive justification of the prolonged harassment to which Lattimore has been subjected, is entirely in keeping with the totally anti-libertarian—and indeed, in this case, downright inhumane—spirit of his ideas about cultural freedom in America.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

V

It is to the credit of several ACCF members that they have not kept silent about the Stein scandal. A series of letters from ACCF leaders appeared in the February 28, 1955 issue of *The New Republic,* and these are worthy of close scrutiny. Herbert J. Muller, in a blunt attack on Stein, wrote:

> . . . It is humiliating that a nation confronted by literally life or death issues should still be distracted and embittered by an hysterical search for scapegoats . . . it seems unfortunate to me that (liberals) should dissipate what little influence they have by . . . feeling obliged to prove their 100 percent liberality of spirit by springing to the defense of a McCarran.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr. wrote to say he thought the ACCF "ought to find better things to do than to harry Lattimore." Richard Rovere caustically referred to Mr. Stein's "satisfied-customer view of the McCarran Committee"—an indictment which not even a hostile critic could improve upon. Mr. Rovere cast further light upon the ACCF when he remarked that the majority of its Executive agreed with Stein's views *"and looks upon mine as eccentric."* (Emphasis mine—M. H.)

But by far the best and most impressive letter came from David Riesman. Since Mr. Riesman's views on American society have been subjected to a good deal of criticism in DISSENT, it is only just that his position receive here the praise it deserves. We reprint his letter in full, and particularly invite attention to his final sentence:

> SIRS:
>
> I recently resigned from the Executive Committee of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom. My decision to do so was taken long before the letter on the Gilbert article, though letters such as this, which appeared to me to demand the entire Committee's attention for the vindictive pursuit of the shrinking minority of "liberals who haven't learned," was one of the reasons for my resignation. (I had delayed resigning at the urging of friends who hoped that the Executive Committee could be reconstituted, so as to become more representative of the concerns of the membership at large, but I eventually became convinced that this was not the case and that, at any rate, I did not have the time, energy, and capacity for the effort.) The Committee, it goes without saying, has accomplished many good and valuable things, in clarifying the nature of Communist totalitarianism and in exposing the apologetics of its fellow-travelers, and in defending, as an aspect of cultural freedom, civil liberties in the academic and intellectual community; many activities of the latter sort have, in the interests of the individuals involved, not been publicized. Still, what appeared to me as a disproportionate amount of the Committee's limited energies have gone into the drafting and discussion of such things as Mr. Stein's letter—a task that can be left to individuals (and Congressional committees!) and one that does not require a Committee for Cultural Freedom.
>
> Just before resigning, I had written a letter to Mr. Stein asking to be dissociated from the letter on the Lattimore case, and suggesting that whoever wrote it sign it and speak for himself. My own judgment about the chain which runs from Tydings to McCarran to the perjury persecu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion is mixed, and really beside the point, since I share (as I am sure do most members of the Committee) Mr. Gilbert's belief in due process and his insistence on procedural safeguards. In writing Mr. Stein about the draft letter, I once more emphasized my feeling that there were more important issues demanding the Executive Committee's consideration, and that in any event (irrespective of the factual accuracy of the letter, which I did not question) to put the whole weight of the Committee for Cultural Freedom behind the pursuit of an already beleaguered man, living in limbo and not permitted to teach classes, was an act of inhumanity.

DAVID RIESMAN

It is sad—indeed, humiliating—to report, however, that the official ACCF position found its only supporter in . . . Norman Thomas, the leader of the Socialist Party and also active in the ACCF. A good part of Thomas' long letter consisted of a blustering attack on the author of the original *New Republic* article for using a pseudonym—as if Thomas had not associated during his life-time with numerous socialists who, for good and sufficient reasons, also used pseudonyms. Thomas then went on to say that "Lawyers, devoted to civil liberty," have praised the McCarran inquiry into Lattimore as "something of a model in Congressional investigation." And again: "One can stand up for Owen Lattimore's rights when he is threatened with criminal proceedings and yet believe intelligent opinion in and out of Congress was the gainer of the inquiry conducted by Judge Morris" (i.e., the McCarran committee.)

In the same issue of *The New Republic* there is an extremely effective answer to Thomas by the magazine's editor, Michael Straight, in which it is demonstrated at length that the McCarran Committee did not follow the rules for fair investigation set up by Thomas himself in his book *The Test of Freedom,* and that it did not aid public understanding of anything. That Norman Thomas, identified in American eyes with the cause of socialism, should have let himself be put in the position of defending Sol Stein's outrage—this tells us a great deal not merely about the ACCF but about the debacle of American radical and liberal politics in general.

VI

It would be easy to adopt a simple tone of anger against the ACCF. Yet the point in analyzing it cannot be a mere denunciation, if only because its membership includes good and honest people; it acts as it does not out of malice or because it is manipulated by a secret caucus, but from what is evidently free choice. Why then has it drifted into such an anomalous position?

Part of the answer is supplied by the general development of American society. In *White Collar,* C. Wright Mills assigns considerable importance to the rise of the intellectual technician and the parallel bureaucratization of society—with a consequent loss of independence on the part of the intellectual who is absorbed in this process. Another description of the same process (although with a totally different—in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

deed sympathetic—judgment of the result) was made by Lionel Trilling in the *Partisan Review*: "Intellect has associated itself with power as perhaps never before in history, and is now conceded to be itself a kind of power."

And indeed, in going over the roster of the American Committee one does find intellect associated with power, the successful journalists, editors, union functionaries and the like. Certainly this process of the loss of independence and the rationalization of the intellectual life plays a part in the creation of a phenomenon like the American Committee. It indicates an almost complete reversal of the traditional estimate of the intellectual as a focus of opposition toward the *status quo;* it marks an abdication of critical function.

This general point gains in concreteness when it is related to the cold war. The feeling of betrayal which developed out of the increase of knowledge with regard to Stalinism was reinforced by the tremendous polarizing effect of the cold war. Together, the two events hastened an either/or kind of philosophy; the very mood of American intellectual life in recent years has become increasingly that of "critical support" (with the inevitable emphasis on the second term gaining the ascendancy) of American foreign policy. Here, the loss of independence is intensified by the polarities of the international situation. And when this is combined with the more basic social process of bureaucratization of the intellectual life, the result is the kind of ambiguity embodied in the American Committee.

Finally, certain speculations are possible with regard to the reasoning of some ACCF leaders. In a way, the ACCF is organized along lines rather similar to the select social club or, if one wishes to be more kindly, a self-appointed and self-perpetuating "academy." Members are co-opted after sponsorship; one must be *chosen.* A good number of its active leaders are people who have had bitter and scarring experiences with Stalinism, whether through party membership, front association, denunciation as Trotskyists real or assumed, etc. Some of them are people with a feeling that *only they* appreciate the urgency of combating Stalinism, a feeling of vast and even violent impatience with those "ritualistic liberals" who cling to the traditional pieties of civil libertarianism. This feeling is rather similar, though it is not quite the same, as that which has been described by Hannah Arendt as the "ex-Communist" syndrome—*only they* can know the cunning and power of the enemy. It is not a feeling likely to make for either a supple politics or a firm defense of cultural freedom.

These elements of social and personal motivation may put certain ACCF leaders in an understandable light, but they do not, and cannot, excuse the political basis and actual practice of the Committee. With increasing velocity, the ACCF has moved toward the position of embracing "pure and simple" (which is to say, not at all pure) anti-Stalinism, while maintaining a great deal of silence on the state of cultural freedom in the United States. In the 1930's many a Stalinist front group was for freedom here and not in Russia. In the 1950's there has been

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a certain reversal of terms, a drive for absolute freedom in Russia (where the ACCF does not yet have any influence) and an ambiguity with regard to freedom in the U.S. (where it does have influence). Neither point of view adds stature to American intellectuals.

Meanwhile, the exchange in *The New Republic* has served to bring implicit disagreements into the open. David Riesman's letter poses a challenge that neither the ACCF leadership nor its members can ignore. We do not think it an exaggeration to say that the issue involves far more than the attitude of intellectuals toward Lattimore: it involves nothing less than the future of cultural freedom. That is, it involves the question faced by all the accredited institutions of American liberalism: will they, in a situation where every social pressure makes for accommodation and retreat, be able to remain liberal?

3. Cain and Humphrey

Murray Kempton

Americans for Democratic Action would be a vastly improved organization if it would do two things. The first would be to unfrock the Hon. Hubert Humphrey as its vice chairman. The second would be to give its annual award this spring to the Hon. Harry P. Cain, former U. S. Senator from Washington.

Humphrey continues to offend the sensitive by defending the disgraceful bill he introduced into the Senate last summer which would have saved us from communism by sending every pitiable old woman in the open party to prison for five years as a conspirator. You would think it was something a man would prefer to forget, but Humphrey glories in it.

His conduct is a rather extreme of what has become a habit pattern for most of our liberal paladins. None get better, some get worse, and the best of them earn what credit they deserve by standing still. That is why Harry Cain deserves an award of some sort. Harry Cain has gotten better.

As a Senator, Harry Cain was one of Joe McCarthy's best friends. When he was foully cut down by the voters of Washington in 1952, Joe wrote a letter to C. E. Wilson suggesting Cain for Assistant Secretary of Defense. Cain finally settled down as a member of the Subversive Activities Control Board.

The other day, the *Reporter* sent a man around to see Harry Cain in his office. The visit was occasioned by a recent speech in which Cain had warned that our security system was making "cowards and mental robots out of free men and women." What, the *Reporter* wanted to know, had happened to Harry Cain?

"Well," said Cain, "for the first time since I got out of school, I have 50 per cent of my time to think.

"One day a man came in from my state. He was a scientist and a security case. He told me neither one of his Senators nor his Congress-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

man was interested in him. They wouldn't touch his case with a 10-foot pole . . . I told him I'd look into it and see what I could do. I'm not a lawyer, but I defended that one."

The Senators who turned their backs on this man in trouble are named Henry Jackson and Warren Magnuson and they are pillars to the ADA.

This man, Cain went on, "was a scientist working on cancer problems for the government. What could be more important to the country? But someone said he was a Communist organizer back in 1941 . . . And an old lady of 80 wrote in and said he used to associate with some funny people. Of course, he did; he's a non-conformist." When did you last hear the word non-conformist on the lips of Hubert Humphrey? . . .

Harry Cain hopes the White House will think about these things. If it doesn't, he says he can quit. I wish he would and I wish he'd try again for the Senate and then Warren Magnuson could spend 50 per cent of his time thinking a little while and be a better man, too.

Okay, so Cain may go back and be the landlords' Senator again and vote for the Dixon-Yates contract. He can vote for Taft-Hartley; and, if I lived in Washington, I'd vote for him against any sitting liberal. To hell with liberals. What good's a man if he votes unlimited funds to build school gymnasiums and shuts his mouth when teachers are bullied and debased? . . .

(Reprinted from the *New York Post.*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE CHANGING STATUS OF THE NEGRO

Bob Bone

Surely the most curious paradox in recent U.S. history is the breakdown of caste relations between the races. It is curious because it is occurring under official auspices—under the sponsorship of a government not noted, at least in recent years, for bold and imaginative social innovation. It is paradoxical because it is occurring at a time when reaction has the initiative in all other political spheres.

Whatever one's interpretation of this paradox, no one can doubt that a revolutionary transformation is taking place. We are witnessing the disintegration of a caste system which for seventy-five years has controlled the pattern of social intercourse between Negro and white. To appreciate fully what is being un-done, it may be relevant to recall what was done in the first place, during those momentous years when the Negro was emancipated, but not set free.

The Genesis of Caste

Even before slavery was abolished, a new fabric of race relations was being woven to replace it. Caste relations, as distinct from the direct property-bond between master and slave, date from the earliest existence of a free colored population. Long before Emancipation, nominally free colored citizens were subjected to segregation in housing and travel, discrimination in employment, and exclusion from places of public accommodation. Although *incipient* caste relations existed under slavery, the American caste *system* did not crystallize until the post-Reconstruction era, when a wave of repression followed the withdrawal of Federal troops from the South.

Emancipation caused an economic and social revolution in the Old South. At one stroke it wrecked the plantation economy, severed the master-slave relationship between the races, and threw the former bondsman into the wage-market as a legal equal. During the Reconstruction Period which followed, the freedman attempted, under the protection of the Federal government, to consolidate his new status against the inevitable reaction which was to come. By 1876 the Republican Party grew "tired" of being revolutionary (it has never regretted the decision) and abandoned the Negro to the tender mercies of the white South.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The result was the post-Reconstruction repression. It was a period in which the Negro was systematically stripped of his civil rights in order to assure the restoration of white supremacy. The old plantation economy was revived, based now on share-cropping and tenant-farming, peonage and convict-lease. Disfranchisement followed inevitably as a means of preventing legal redress for renewed economic exploitation. By 1900, Mississippi, Louisiana, and the Carolinas had disfranchised the Negro with "Grandfather Clause," poll tax, and terror. Where legal methods failed, the Klan and the lynch-mob took over. As a Negro novelist of the period observed, "Lynching was instituted to crush the manhood of the enfranchised black."

In the years between 1876 and 1900, the foundations of the American caste system were laid. The new system rested ultimately on the plantation economy of the rural South; it was sustained in custom and in law by *segregation,* an elaborate pattern of caste relations which partly separates the races and partly permits them to mingle, but only under circumstances humiliating to the subordinate caste. During these years segregation laws were enacted in all spheres of life, from education and travel to housing and marriage. These laws, moreover, were promptly ratified by the Supreme Court, in a series of "separate but equal" decisions. Thus black robe and white each made its unique contribution to the establishment of the American caste system.

This pattern of caste persisted, without any apparent loss of vigor, down to the period of America's participation in the Second World War. In the past 15 years, however—roughly since 1940—the ram horn has been sounded, and the walls are tumblin' down. Simply to summarize the high points of this development will attest to its deep and permanent character.

The Breakdown of Caste

The first important blow to be struck against caste by the Federal government was FDR's Executive Order of June 25, 1941. Forced upon a reluctant President by A. Philip Randolph's "March-on-Washington Movement,"* the order created a Fair Employment Practices Committee within the War Manpower Commission. It was the task of this committee to see that hiring under government contract in the nation's war-plants was conducted without regard to race, creed, or national origin. Shortly after the war (1945-1949), eight Northern industrial States adopted similar anti-discrimination laws in the field of employment—laws which often covered public accommodation as well.

In inter-state travel, two important court decisions (Morgan v.

* See Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* p. 414, for the story of negotiations between Randolph and Roosevelt.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Virginia, 1946; and Henderson v. US, 1950) have virtually abolished segregation in seating and dining-car arrangements. In housing, the Supreme Court (Shelley v. Kramer, 1946) has outlawed the enforcement of restrictive covenants through civil suits, though not as yet the covenants themselves. In family law, by a California Supreme Court decision in 1948, a State law forbidding miscegenation was held unconstitutional. In politics, the white primary has been outlawed (Smith v. Allbright, 1944), while the poll tax survives in only five Southern States. In military life, the integration of the armed forces was effected by President Truman's Executive Order 9981 (1948). Above all, in education, the separation of the races has been held invalid in a series of decisions starting with Sweatt v. Painter (Texas, 1950) and McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents (1950), and culminating in the historic Supreme Court decision of 1954.

In short, the edifice of white supremacy is crumbling in every important cultural area. In spite of what radicals and socialists have said about the limitations of legal formalism, and in spite of the Negro's continuing experience of caste, the historical trend is unmistakable. When the editors of *Collier's* import Alan Paton from South Africa to comment upon the scope and significance of this trend, one can safely assume that the revolution has "arrived."

The all-important matter of interpretation remains: why, in a few short years, have such immense strides been made in the field of civil rights when, for example, the situation in regard to civil liberties has been steadily deteriorating? Official liberalism maintains, in a mood of self-congratulation, that the democratic conscience of America has at last become aroused. Those who view the democratic conscience of America with some misgivings will prefer to seek a more substantial explanation. Like all revolutions, this one involves both a weakening of the *ancien régime* from within, and an attack upon it from without. The former has to do with vast changes in the economic life of the South; the latter, with America's role on the world scene, and with the slow emergence in this country of what Harold Lasswell has called a Garrison State.

The Negro and the Southern Economy

The breakdown of caste in America has more to do with Southern economics than with Northern ideology. As of 1940, some 75 per cent of all American Negroes still lived in the South, and of these, 63 per cent still lived on Southern farms, rather than in Southern cities. With due respect for cultural inertia, and for secondary psychological factors, the *roots* of the caste system are still to be found in the quasi-feudal plantation system which has traditionally dominated

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Southern agriculture. This system, and the cotton crop on which it was based, necessitated a large, disciplined labor force, which in the absence of slavery necessitated caste. What has been happening in the last few decades to the economic roots of the caste system?

To begin with, cotton is no longer King. It was effectively dethroned during the 1930s, by a combination of world agricultural trends and the farm policy of the New Deal. In 1929, in spite of increased competition from Egypt and China, 43 million acres of American cotton were under cultivation. By 1932, however, as a result of the saturation of the world market, the figure had dropped to 36 million acres. During the first year of the AAA, which subsidized landlords for curtailing cotton production (incidentally pushing Negro sharecroppers off the land), it was further reduced to 29 million acres. Moreover, by pegging prices through crop-restriction, the American government unwittingly caused a further loss to American cotton in foreign markets. This loss, together with domestic competition from synthetic fabrics, has brought a subsequent decline to only 20 million acres in 1948. In sum, cotton acreage has declined during the two decades from 1929 to 1948 by approximately 53 per cent.

This sharp decline has had an enormous impact upon the structure both of Southern agriculture and of Southern industry. In 1929, cotton represented 40 per cent of the total acreage under cultivation in the South; in 1948, it accounted for only 22 per cent. Since cotton farming requires an abundance of cheap, manual labor, a greater diversification in Southern agriculture has resulted in a shrinking demand for farm labor. The textile industry, as might be expected, has declined in importance along with the cotton crop. From 1939 to 1947, its proportion of the total wage-earners in Southern industry declined from 35 per cent to 27 per cent. In broad terms, then, a new emancipation has occurred: for the first time in American history, the fortunes of the American Negro are no longer largely dependent upon the fortunes of the cotton crop.

The plantation system is doomed not only by the demise of King Cotton, but by the inevitable mechanization of Southern agriculture. The South has lagged far behind the rest of the nation in the purchase of farm machinery, but during the war, as a result of high incomes and manpower shortage, it began to narrow the gap.* Given the patterns of Southern prejudice, there can be no doubt that the "poor-whites" will operate most of this new machinery, while Negroes are forced off the land. Mechanization portends not only a further decline

* In 1945, the value of farm implements and machinery in the South was $406 per farm; in the non-South, $1292 per farm. But the *rate of growth* for the South during the war years (1940-1945) was considerably greater (84% as against 49% for the non-South).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in Negro farm labor, but an increase in the average size of farms, in order to make the investment in farm machinery profitable. And as one Southern economist points out, "It is the plantations with their croppers that can most easily be recast into the large-scale mechanized agriculture that offers efficiency in the economic sense . . . "*

Meanwhile the whole agricultural sector of the Southern economy has been losing ground to the manufacturing sector. Income from Southern agriculture was 65 per cent greater than from manufacturing in 1929, but only 10 per cent greater in 1948; the employment ratio between agriculture and non-agriculture was 50-50 in 1920, but 35-65 in 1940. During the war this long-range trend was greatly accelerated by the heavy investment of the Federal government in shipyards, aircraft factories, and munitions plants—an investment which *doubled* the Southern industrial plant as of 1939. From 1939 to 1947, the number of wage-earners in manufacturing rose from 1,349,000 to 2,023,000, or exactly 50 per cent. New industrial construction soared from $154 million, or 19.6 per cent of the national total in 1939, to $776 million, or 21.7 per cent in 1948. In public utilities construction, which is often a barometer of future industrial development, the South increased its proportion of the US total from 22.3 per cent to 31.3 per cent. In a word, the plantation South is being destroyed by the remorseless process of capital accumulation.**

As the South industrializes, the farm population will continue to decline, and eventually the Negro sharecropper will become a factory-hand. In the long run, as Gunnar Myrdal suggests, there is no place for the Negro in Southern agriculture; he will ultimately be absorbed into industry, both North and South. The impact of his urbanization on the American caste system is already apparent. In the city, because of the collective strength of the Negro ghetto, old-style terror is unthinkable. The Negro emerges as a political force, with full access to the machinery of government for the defense of his rights.† A higher standard of living and a higher educational level breeds self-confidence and militancy, and eventually factory experience will breed trade-union consciousness.

The Negro and the Permanent War Economy

The forces described above would undoubtedly suffice, in the fullness of time, to destroy caste in America. Taken alone, however,

---

* Hoover & Ratchford, *Economic Resources and Policies of the South* (1951).

** These basic economic changes are not without political manifestation. Already the end of the one-party system is foreshadowed by the 1952 elections, in which large sections of the "solid" South (especially heavily industrialized Texas) deserted to the Republicans.

† The number of Negro voters in the South increased from 250,000 in 1940 to 1,250,000 in 1952—mostly in the Southern cities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they cannot account for the amazing progress of the last fifteen years, nor for the role of the Federal government in these developments. Why did the Negro suddenly discover friends in high places? What is the driving force which converts Presidents and Supreme Court Justices, statesmen and politicians, Republican and Democrat alike, to a policy of "racial liberalism"?

For the first time since the Reconstruction era, the Federal government is intervening in American life on behalf of the Negro. Some sense of historical necessity must emerge, if only one contemplates the forces making for racial integration as they flow around the solid rock of Senate filibuster. Blocked in the legislature, these forces have expressed themselves through the executive and judicial branches of the Federal government. The problem, however, is not merely to acknowledge this historical necessity, but to trace it to its source.

Historical insight often commences with a date. It is essential to note in this regard that no significant measures against caste were undertaken by the Federal government prior to Roosevelt's wartime FEPC (1941). On the contrary, parts of the New Deal's social program were distinctly anti-Negro in effect, if not intention. The impact of the AAA on the Negro sharecropper has been touched upon; the Federal Housing Administration provides another case in point. Alan Paton observes in his *Collier's* article of October 29 that the FHA, early in its career, regarded itself as a business venture, and held Negro occupancy of its projects to be harmful from a business point of view. In 1937, it actually published a model restrictive-covenant, which was only dropped in 1949 under pressure from the NAACP.

Why, throughout the period of New Deal labor legislation, was no provision made for fair employment practices? The NRA codes, or the National Labor Relations Act, would have been appropriate instruments for such a purpose, but nothing of the sort appeared. Perhaps the New Deal was preoccupied; perhaps Roosevelt's "statesmanlike" alliance with the Southern Democrats accounts for the oversight. In any event, the do-nothing policy of the Roosevelt administration was reversed only under the pressure of preparation for global war. Appropriately enough, the new era in American race relations was ushered in by way of the War Manpower Commission.

It is no coincidence that the first serious breach in the American caste system appeared during the period of "national defense." In the late 1930s, whether wittingly or not, the Roosevelt administration turned from public works to armaments as the central core of its economic program. For some fifteen years, and through three separate administrations, American capitalism has solved its chronic crisis by this means, until sophisticated conservatives have come to adopt a con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scious perspective of permanent war economy. It is against this background that the current climate of "racial tolerance" must be seen. It has been the product not so much of war and cold-war strategy as of an unconscious drive for national unity which is the natural corollary of a permanent war economy.

For those who understand the main drift of American politics since the Roosevelt era of "national defense," the contradictory trends in civil rights and civil liberties present no paradox. Both are a part of America's preparation for war; both aim to secure a maximum fighting effectiveness for the nation. Within this frame of reference, Attorney-General Brownell can on one day submit an *amicus curiae* to the Supreme Court urging integration of the schools, and on the next, request Congress to increase the penalty for thought-crimes under the Smith Act to twenty years. Only bewildered liberals like Alan Paton are incapable of understanding this paradox. Paton reflects, for example, as he visits the new American Army, "on the amazing scene around me, with its amazing implications—that it was the Army with its tanks and guns and bombs that had struck this particular fetter from men's minds and advanced the cause of the Lord of Peace."

We are living in a period when foreign-policy considerations are decisive in determining the course of domestic events. America must garrison an empire; therefore some form of permanent military conscription is inevitable. America must avoid internal economic crisis at all costs; therefore the American economy will contain a huge armaments sector for the foreseeable future. America must staff its fighting forces (both military and civilian, for the distinction has disappeared) with loyal personnel; therefore important concessions must be made to a disadvantaged minority group which numbers over fifteen million. A. Philip Randolph's abortive movement to boycott a Jim-Crow Army (1947-48) was not without its effect. The Negro question has become a military manpower question—a matter of organizing American resources for war.

It is interesting to note that the American Negro has chosen the term "integration" to designate his desire to become a first-class citizen. As modern nations prepare for war, precisely what occurs is a *Gleichschaltung,* or integration, in the course of which minority groups are either absorbed or eliminated. In the current American *Gleichschaltung,* the impulse with respect to Negroes is toward absorption; with respect to political dissidents, toward repression. This is the meaning both of first-class citizenship for Negroes, and of second-class citizenship (or no citizenship at all) for "subversives."

Under the exigencies of the world power struggle, America moves slowly toward a garrison state. In such a society, the distinctive frame

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of reference is fighting effectiveness. The value hierarchy is reorganized, and white supremacy becomes a luxury. The garrison state, like a jealous god, knows no other gods before it—not even so venerable an American deity as a white skin. Ideally in such a society there should be no organized economic, religious, or cultural life outside of the duly constituted agencies of government: hence the bureaucratic nature of the present revolution, with the armed forces acting as the vanguard of social progress.

In a period when American capitalism thinks not in terms of expansion, but of survival, Jim Crow is discarded because it has no survival-value. The clash between this new frame of reference and the outmoded system of white supremacy appears nowhere more clearly than in the clash between the armed forces and the white South. Year after year, whenever Universal Military Training is introduced in Congress, the Mississippi delegation votes solidly against a proposal which "will make ouah nigras uppity." As Alan Paton points out in his interview with Governor Byrnes, respect for what was once the Union Army is the Achilles' heel of the white South. When asked how the South could tolerate the presence of Army posts where no segregation was practiced, the Governor replied, "if these were the policies of the Army, there was nothing more to be said. . . . " And in this reply, as Paton remarks, one sees clearly the final yielding of the South.

The Human Dimension

Threatened from within by the modernization of the South, and from without by the current *Gleichschaltung,* the American caste system is disintegrating before our eyes. Without drawing sentimental or chauvinistic conclusions from this turn of events, socialists must acknowledge it as eminently desirable. For whatever the historical forces motivating the breakdown of caste, the human gain will be immense. As caste crumbles, millions of Negroes and whites will experience a sense of liberation from its de-humanizing consequences. If the government is at last doing the right thing for the wrong reasons, let us to that extent rejoice.

At the same time, recognizing the roots of the current situation, we must also recognize its limitations. The "Negro problem" is still very far from being solved; a society in which it can be *assumed* that one's fate or life-chances in no essential way depend on the color of one's skin is still very far from being a reality in America. The American Negro, North and South, is still far from being in the position where he can say that what happens to him happens because of his personal qualities or his impersonal fate as a member of society: he knows, and he is right to know it, that his "Negro-ness" is in many ways the most crucial element depriving him of the rights and privileges which people

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of white skins take for granted. The removal of discrimination, the removal of segregation would be great historical events, yet it would be premature indeed to suppose that these would, *ipso facto,* eliminate the inferior *condition* to which the social customs, if not quite so much the social forms, of America reduce him. Integration in the schools, as any Northerner knows, can be largely nullified by continuing discrimination in housing and employment. Equality before the law is a hollow triumph unless it is followed by widespread social intercourse across the color-line. Legal and formal victories must be given human content; they must be supplemented by continuing political pressure and by the ultimate symbol of acceptance: personal association. For whites this involves not merely good will, but a serious effort to understand Negro life and culture; for Negroes, it often involves unlearning strong feelings of hostility and distrust. In this way, impersonal historical forces can be translated into human terms. For radicals, interracial activity represents one of the few remaining areas where personal initiative really matters.

The work of Franz Neumann is known to American readers primarily through his massive study of Naziism, Behemoth, *a book that in a decade or so has achieved the status of a major contribution to modern political thought. Neumann, who was killed in an automobile accident in Switzerland last September, had also gained a reputation in the world of anti-Nazi Germans as an editor of Montesquieu, a writer on the relation between law and society, and a student of political theory. In pre-Hitler Germany he had been a lawyer working with the trade unions and the Social Democratic Party.*

"Anxiety in Politics" is his last completed work, a lecture delivered at the Free University in Berlin in May 1954. It is to form part of a collection of his essays to be edited by Herbert Marcuse and published by the Free Press in 1955. We gratefully acknowledge their permission to print it here, for the first time in English, in abbreviated form. A certain amount of historical background, as well as Neumann's scholarly references, have been omitted for reasons of space.

About this essay Herbert Marcuse writes, "To many of [Neumann's] friends, this was a surprise. He had always rejected the interpretation of politics in psychological terms: he knew that political decisions . . . result from the development of societal institutions and relationships." Nonetheless, adds Marcuse, "it was not an escape into psychology. The title calls reality by its name: it epitomizes the political situation of man in contemporary society."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ANXIETY IN POLITICS

Franz Neumann

How does it happen that the masses sell their souls to leaders and follow them blindly? On what does the power of attraction of leaders over masses rest? What are the historical situations in which this identification of leader and masses is successful, and what view of history do the men have who accept leaders?

The extraordinary difficulty in the comprehension of group-psychological phenomena lies first of all in our own prejudices; for the experiences of the last decades have instilled in us all more or less strong prejudices against the masses, and we associate with "masses" the epithet "mob"—a group of men who are capable of every atrocity. In fact the science of group psychology began with this aristocratic prejudice in the work of the Italian Scipio Sighele, and Le Bon's famous book is completely in this tradition. His theses are familiar. Man in the mass descends; he is, as it were, hypnotized by the leader (*operateur*) and in this condition is capable of committing acts which he would never commit as an individual. As the slave of unconscious—i.e. for Le Bon, regressive—sentiments man in the mass is degraded into a barbarian: "Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian—that is, a creature acting by instinct. He possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm and heroism of primitive beings." Critics of Le Bon, among them also Freud, have pointed out that his theory, which rests on Sighele and Tarde, is inadequate in two aspects: the answer to the question, What holds the masses together? is inadequate, for the existence of a "racial soul" is unproved. In addition, in Le Bon the decisive problem—the role of the leader-hypnotist—remains unclarified. As is frequently true in social-psychological studies, the descriptions of psychological states are adequate, the theoretical analyses inadequate.

FROM THE OUTSET, FREUD SEES THE PROBLEM as that of the identification of masses with a leader; an identification which becomes of decisive significance particularly in an anxiety situation. And he sees in the libido the cement which holds leader and masses together, whereby—as is known—the concept of libido is to be taken in a very broad sense, to include the instinctual activities, which "in relations between the sexes . . . force their way toward sexual union," as well as those which "in other circumstances . . . are diverted from this aim or are prevented from reaching it, though always preserving enough of their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

original nature to keep their identity recognizable (as in such features as the longings for proximity, and self-sacrifice)." The cement which holds the mass together and ties them to the leader is thus a sum of instincts that are inhibited in their aims.

Since the identification of masses with the leader is an alienation of the individual member, identification always constitutes a regression, and a twofold one. On the one hand, the history of man is the history of his emergence from the primal horde and of his progressive individualization. Thus the identification with a leader in a mass is a kind of *historical* regression; this identification is also a "substitute for a libidinal object tie," thus a *psychological* regression, a damaging of the ego, perhaps even the loss of the ego.

But this judgment is valid only for the libido-charged, i.e., affective, identification of an individual in a mass with a leader; and not as a matter of course (and perhaps not at all) for that of lovers and of small groups. Non-affective identification too, cannot be simply considered as regressive. For identification with organizations (church, army) is not always libidinally charged.

It is thus necessary to make distinctions. There are affect-less identifications, in which coercion or common material interests play an essential role, either in bureaucratic-hierarchic or in cooperative form. It seems to me incorrect, above all for recent history, to see in the identification of the soldier with the army, i.e., in the loyalty to an organization, an actual identification of the soldier with the commander-in-chief. Surely there are examples of this—Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Wallenstein, Napoleon. But the commander-in-chief of the 20th century is much more the technician of war than the leader of men, and the libidinal tie of the soldier is, if I may coin the phrase, essentially cooperative, namely with the smallest group of comrades with whom he shares dangers.

Thus I would like to establish two fundamental types of identification: a libido-charged (affective) and a libido-free (affect-less); and maintain generally that the non-affective identification with an organization is less regressive than the affective identification with a leader. Non-affective loyalty is transferable, personal loyalty is not. The former always contains strong rationalist elements, elements of calculability between organization and individual, and thus prevents the total extinction of the ego.

But I believe that one must also distinguish two types within affective identification. One may call them: cooperative and caesaristic. It is conceivable (and it has probably happened in short periods in history) that many equals identify themselves cooperatively with one another in such a manner that their egos are merged in the collective ego. But this cooperative form is rare, limited to short periods or in any case operative only for small groups. The decisive affective identification is that of masses with leaders. It is—as I have said—the most

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

regressive form, for it is built upon a nearly total ego-shrinkage. It is the form which is of decisive significance for us. We shall call it caesaristic identification.

Caesaristic Identification and False Concreteness: The Conspiracy Theory in History

Caesaristic identifications may play a role in history when the situation of masses is objectively endangered, when the masses are incapable of understanding the historical process, and when the anxiety activated by the danger becomes neurotic persecutory anxiety through manipulation.

From this follows, first of all, that not every situation dangerous to the masses must lead to a caesaristic movement; it follows further, that not every mass movement is based on anxiety, and thus not every mass movement need be caesaristic.

Thus it is a question of determining the historical conditions in which a regressive mass movement under a Caesar tries to win political power.

1) However, before we describe these historical situations, I may perhaps point to a clue which will frequently permit us an early diagnosis of the regressive character of such a mass movement. This clue is the view of history which the masses and the leaders employ. It may be called the conspiracy theory of history, a theory of history characterized by a false concreteness. The connection between caesarism and this view of history is quite evident. Just as the masses hope for their deliverance from distress through absolute oneness with a person, so they ascribe their distress to certain persons, who have brought this distress into the world through a conspiracy. The historical process is personified in his manner. Hatred, resentment, dread, created by great upheavals, are concentrated on certain persons who are denounced as devilish conspirators. Nothing would be more incorrect than to characterize the enemies as scapegoats, for they appear as genuine enemies whom one must extirpate and not as substitutes whom one only needs to send into the wilderness. The danger consists in the fact that this view of history is never completely false, but always contains a kernel of truth and, indeed, must contain it, if it is to have a convincing effect. The truer it is, one might say, the less regressive the movement; the falser, the more regressive.

It is my thesis that wherever affective (i.e., caesaristic) leader-identifications occur in politics, masses and leader have this view of history: i.e., that the distress which has befallen the masses has been brought about exclusively by a conspiracy of certain persons or groups against the people.

With this view of history real anxiety, which had been produced by war, want, hunger, anarchy, is to be transformed into neurotic anxiety and is to be overcome by means of identification with the leader-demagogue through total ego-renunciation, to the advantage of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

leader and his clique, whose true interests do not necessarily have to correspond to those of the masses.

Of course, I cannot provide conclusive proof, but I believe that by pointing to certain historical events I can make clear the connection between this view of history and caesarism.

2) An interesting affective identification of leader and masses is the relation of Cola di Rienzo to the Roman people. I assume that his story is familiar—the rise of the hack lawyer, son of a Roman innkeeper and a washerwoman, to Tribune of the Roman people and dictator of Rome, his expulsion and return with the aid of the Church, and his assassination by the Colonna family in the year 1354. The view of history of Cola and of the Roman people was quite simple: Rome has been ruined by feudal lords; their destruction will permit Rome to rise again to its ancient greatness. This is how Petrarch formulates it in his famous letter of congratulation to Cola: "These barons in whose defense you [the Romans] have so often shed your blood, whom you have nourished with your own substance . . . these barons have judged you unworthy of liberty. They have gathered the mangled remnants of the state in the caverns and abominable retreats of bandits . . . . They have been restrained neither by pity for their unhappy country, nor by love for it . . . . Do not suffer any of the rapacious wolves whom you have driven from the fold to rush again into your midst. Even now they are prowling restlessly around, endeavoring through fraud and deceit . . . to regain an entrance to the city whence they were violently expelled." It cannot be denied that the feudal lords, above all the Colonna and Orsini, had pursued a criminal policy. Without this element of truth Cola's propaganda and policy would never have been successful. But fundamentally this was a false concreteness, for even if he had succeeded in liquidating the barons—what would have been decisively improved in Rome? The historical facts—the residence of the Papal Court in Avignon; the economic decay of Rome; the regrouping of class relations through the rise of the bourgeois *cavalerotti*—all that Cola could not change. It can hardly be doubted that anxiety, even purely physical fear of the arbitrariness of the barons, drove the people to Cola. Cola succeeded in strengthening this anxiety by extremely skillful propaganda and achieved victory. But the leader himself must feel no anxiety or at least must not show it. He must stand above the masses. In this respect Cola was deficient. In all other matters his relation corresponded exactly to that of the libido-charged identification leader-masses. It was Cola's fundamental mistake that he was not enough of a Caesar. To be sure, he publicly humiliated the barons but he did not liquidate them—whether out of cowardice, decency, or tactical considerations. But the masses of Rome expected that he would act in accordance with the conspiratorial view of history. He did not do this. Thus he had to fall.

I have mentioned Cola di Rienzo, because it is a marginal case in which it is doubtful whether we are dealing with a regressive or a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

progressive movement; that is, a movement which really has the realization of the freedom of man as its goal.

3) THE EIGHT FRENCH RELIGIOUS WARS of the 16th century furnish excellent material for the illumination of the character of caesaristic as well as organizational identifications. All three parties—Huguenots, Catholics, and *Politiques*—were faced with grave problems: the disintegration of the old society through silver inflation, loss of wealth on the one hand, enrichment on the other, the beginnings of radical changes in class relations and the dissolution of the absolute monarchy after the death of Francis I. It is against this background that the religious wars must be understood.

Catholics and Protestants alike saw the problem of France only as a religious problem, and therefore ascribed the distress of France exclusively to their religious opponents, conjectured (partly justifiably) that these opponents represented a great and sinister conspiracy, developed or employed theories of caesaristic identification, and consistently proceeded to extirpate the opponent wherever opportunity offered.

The Huguenot pamphleteer Francois Hotman in his *Tiger* saw in the Cardinal Guise "a detestable monster," whose aim it was to ruin France, to assassinate the King, and to conspire with the aid of the women near the king and the High Constable of France against "the crown of France, the goods of widows and orphans, the blood of the poor and innocent." Calvin's theory of the secular redeemer sent by God to overthrow tyrants—in the 17th century the basis of Cromwell's leadership—became the Protestant theory of Caesarism. The Catholics —with a longer tradition of tyrannicide—developed a pseudo-democratic theory of identification, above all in the writings of the leaguist preachers and Jesuits. In these inflammatory pamphlets whose demagogy even surpasses that of the Huguenots, the theory of democracy is fitted out with the theocratic traits, the masses of the people are integrated through the social contract, in order to be identified with Henry of Guise. Whoever takes the trouble to study the eighth religious war (the War of the 3 Henrys) and the Parisian uprising, will find there all the elements which I consider decisive: appeal to anxiety, personification of evils, first with Henry III, then with Henry of Navarre, identification of the masses with Henry of Guise.

Both positions, the Catholic and the Huguenot, are regressive, while that of the *Politiques,* which Henry IV was later to convert into action, is incomparably more progressive. Indeed, the great merit of the chief representative of the party of the *Politiques,* Jean Bodin, consists in this: he saw the economic problems of France clearly; he understood the false concreteness of the view of history of both parties. If he championed absolute monarchy—that is, the identification of the people with the monarch—he did so because the monarch was to place himself above the religions that were fighting each other and to ally himself with the households of the third estate in order to save France. Despite the absolute submission to the prince which is demanded of the people,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this identification contains the two rational elements which I mentioned before: loyalty becomes transferable, i.e., the office is separated from the office holder; and the relation between citizen and state becomes rational. Thus Bodin has certain justification in calling his theory a theory of the constitutional state (*droit gouvernement*) despite his absolutism. I believe that the French religious wars of the 16th century make my thesis a little clearer: that the affect-less identification with an institution (state) is less regressive than identification with a leader.

4) Naturally I cannot here discuss all similar situations. The religious struggles of the 16th and 17th centuries are full of such historical constructions.

One need only read, for example, the terrible Calvinist fanatic John Knox in his famous *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* and we will find there: "We se our countrie set furthe for a pray to foreine nations, we heare the blood of our brethren, the membres of Christ Iesus most cruelly to be shed, and the monstruous empire of a cruell woman . . . we knowe to be the onlie occasion of all these miseries." The rule of the Catholic Catherine de Medici, of Marie of Lorraine (the predecessor of Mary Stuart) and of Mary Tudor appears here not only as a violation of divine commandment (because God has subjected women to men) but as a genuine conspiracy against the true religion. Unfortunately John Knox had the ill luck of seeing Protestantism restored in England by a woman and he apologized to Elizabeth in a *Second Blast* for his first attack.

INSTEAD OF CONTINUING WITH THIS SURVEY, it may perhaps be useful to discuss a fundamental model of conspiracy theories, one which shows the sequence: intensification of anxiety through manipulation, identification, false concreteness . . . .

The most important example—if only because of its immense political influence—is the theory of the *conspiracy of the Jews* according to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. These contain the secret plans of Jewish leaders, supposedly formulated in the year 1897, for achieving Jewish world domination by force, terror, corruption, the disintegrating influence of liberalism, freemasonry, etc. This world domination was to be a mock-democracy, through which the Jewish leaders were to operate. That the *Protocols* are a forgery, prepared by Czarist Russians, was definitely established by the Bern trial of 1934-35.

But if the *Protocols* represent a forgery, and if the plans for a Jewish world conspiracy belong in the realm of mythology, where then does that kernel of truth lie which according to my view is necessary to make possible the influence which antisemitism and the *Protocols* have had? I shall confine my analysis to Germany, but the German situation can be understood only when one becomes aware of the fact that in Germany before 1933 *spontaneous* anti-Semitism was extremely weak.

The element of truth (if one may call it that) is first of all a religious one: the catechistic representation of the crucifixion and with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it the blood guilt of the Jews. But this is a thoroughly ambivalent element: for it is precisely the crucifixion of Christ which makes possible the salvation of Christians (and all men); and the spiritually Semitic origin of Christianity is acknowledged by the Church. While thus the historical-religious defamation of the Jews forms the basis without which anti-Semitism could hardly be activated, the catechistic representation of the crucifixion is not sufficient by itself. The existence of a total anti-Semitism can perhaps be better understood if we start from the policy of National Socialism and seek to understand the role of anti-Semitism within the political system. Germany of 1930-33 was the land of alienation and anxiety. The facts are familiar: defeat, a tame unfinished revolution, inflation, depression, non-identification with the existing political parties, non-functioning of the political system—all these are symptoms of moral, social, and political homelessness. The inability to understand why man should be so hard-pressed stimulated anxiety which was made into neurotic anxiety by the National Socialist policy of terror and its propaganda of anti-Semitism. The goal of National Socialism was clear: the welding together of the people with the charismatic leader, for the purpose of the conquest of Europe and perhaps of the world, and the creation of a racial hegemony of the Germans over all other peoples.

But how was the people to be integrated?—despite all cleavages of class, party, religion? Only through hatred of an enemy. But how could one settle on the enemy? It could not be Bolshevism, because it was too strong; the Catholic Church could not be so designated because it was needed politically and loyalties to it were anchored too securely. The Jews remained. They appeared in the public consciousness as powerful—but were in reality weak. They were relative strangers, and at the same time the concrete symbols of a so-called parasitical capitalism—through their position in commerce and finance they incarnated a supposedly decadent morality through their *avant garde* position in art and literature; they seemed to be the successful competitors sexually and professionally. With all this the thesis of the Jewish conspiracy had the element of truth necessary to permit this view of history to become a frightful weapon. It would be mistaken to want to construe a connection between the socio-economic status of a person and his anti-Semitism; that is, to claim that the academically educated person is more immune than the uneducated, or the poorly paid more immune than the better paid. What is correct, however, is that there exists a connection between loss of social status and anti-Semitism. The fear of social degradation thus creates for itself "a target for the discharge of the resentments arising from damaged self-esteem."

This leads us to the analysis of the historical situations in which anxiety grips the masses.

Situations of Collective Anxiety, Identification, Guilt

We have distinguished three strata of alienation. The psychological stratum remains no matter what social institutions man lives

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in, creating potential anxiety which man in the mass attempts to overcome through ego-surrender. This affective identification with a leader is facilitated by the view of history of false concreteness, the theory of conspiracy.

But so far we have not yet said when such regressive mass movements are activated; that is, when potential anxiety can be activated in such a manner that it can become a cruel weapon in the hands of irresponsible leaders.

In order to get at this problem we must take into account the two other strata of alienation: the social and political.

1) Alienation of labor: it is the separation of labor from the product of labor through hierarchical division of labor which characteristizes modern industrial society. Probably no one doubts that the division of labor as well as the hierarchical organization of labor have shown a steady rise since the industrial revolution of the 18th century. German romantic psychology of labor calls this the "de-souling of labor" (*Entseelung der Arbeit*). This concept as well as the various remedies are dangerous—for they cover up the inevitability of this process of alienation which must be admitted, understood, and accepted. If this does not happen, if one refuses to take account of the inevitability of the division of labor and of the hierarchical ordering of the process of labor and attempts to make dependent labor "soulfull" instead of restricting it to a minimum, then social anxiety is deepened. The attitude of the so-called "new middle class" (salaried employees) can exactly be understood from this.

While this new middle class does labor which—to remain with the language of German psychology of labor—is "more de-souled" than that of the industrial worker, and although his average income probably lies below that of the industrial worker, he yet holds fast to his middle class ideology and customs. Thus he refuses to take account of the inevitability of the social process and—as in Germany before 1933—becomes the social stratum most susceptible to caesarism.

2) In a society which is constituted by competition, the competitor is supposed to be rewarded for his effort when he is competent; that is, when he exerts himself, is intelligent, and accepts risks. There is little doubt that the principle of competition dominates not only the economy but all social relations. Karen Horney, a representative of Freudian revisionism, claims that the destructive character of competition creates great anxiety in neurotic persons. Now this is not convincing when genuine competition really prevails, that is, competition in which more or less equally strong persons fight with fair methods; that is, the kind of competition which Adam Smith defines in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* as follows: "One individual must never prefer himself so much even to any other individual as to hurt or injure that other in order to benefit himself, though the benefit of the one should be much greater than the hurt or injury to the other." And again, "In the race for wealth and honours and preferments, each may

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

run as hard as he can and strain every nerve and every muscle in order to outstrip all his competitors. But if he jostle or throw down any of them, the indulgence of the spectator is entirely at an end. It is in violation of fair play, which they cannot admit of." I cannot here undertake a social analysis to show that this ethically circumscribed competition does not exist and perhaps never has existed, that in reality a monopolist struggle hides behind it, that, in other words, the efforts of the individual, his intelligence, his vision, his readiness to take risks, are easily shattered by the constellations of power.

In fact, behind the mask of competition, which is supposed to have no destructive effects when it rationally organizes a society, there hide relations of dependence which make up reality. To be successful in present-day society, it is much more important to stand in well with the powerful than to preserve oneself through one's own strength. Modern man knows this. It is precisely the impotence of the individual who has to accommodate himself to the technological apparatus which is destructive and anxiety-creating.

But even where fair competition is effective, no effort will help if crises ruin the merchant. The inability to understand the process of crises, and the frequent need to ascribe blame for them to sinister powers, is an additional factor in the destruction of the ego. This psychological process operated in the so-called "old middle class" of Germany before 1933.

3) In every society that is composed of antagonistic groups there is an ascent and descent of groups. It is my contention that persecutory anxiety—but one that has a real basis—is produced when a group is threatened in its prestige, income or its existence; i.e., when it declines and does not understand the historical process or is prevented from understanding it. The examples are too numerous to be possibly mentioned here. German National Socialism and Italian Fascism are classical examples.

But not only social classes resist their degradation by means of such mass movements—religious and racial conflicts, too, frequently produce similar phenomena. The conflict between Negroes and whites in the southern states of the U.S., the contemporary struggle of the South African government against the natives, takes place in accord with the following scheme: the anxiety of a dominant white minority that it will be degraded through the economic and political rise of Negroes is used in propagandist fashion for the creation of affective mass movements, which frequently take on a fascist character.

4) Social alienation; i.e., the fear of social degradation, is not adequate by itself. The elements of political alienation must be added. As a rule one is satisfied with defining abstention from voting at elections as political apathy. But I have pointed out elsewhere that the word "apathy" describes three different political reactions: first, the lack of interest in politics, say the opinion that politics is not the business of the citizens because it is after all only a struggle between small cliques and that therefore nothing ever changes fundamentally; then, the Epi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

curean attitude toward politics, the view that politics and states only have to supply the element of order within which man devotes himself to his perfection, so that forms of state and of government appear as secondary matters; and finally, as the third reaction, the conscious rejection of the whole political system which expresses itself as apathy because the individual sees no possibility of changing anything in the system through his efforts. Political life can, for example, be exhausted in the competition of political parties which are purely machines without mass participation, but which monopolize politics to such an extent that a new party cannot make its way within the valid rules of the game. This third form of apathy forms the core of what I characterize as political alienation. Usually this apathy, if it operates within social alienation, leads to the partial paralysis of the state and opens the way to a caesarist movement which, scorning the rules of the game, utilizes the inability of the citizen to make individual decisions and compensates for the loss of ego with identification with a Caesar.

5) THE CAESARISTIC MOVEMENT IS COMPELLED to institutionalize anxiety in two cases: if its coming into power is delayed and after it has actually seized control of the state. The institutionalization of anxiety is necessary in the first case because it can never endure a long wait for power. This is precisely what follows from its affective basis. While the non-affective mass-organization—like a normal political party—can exist for a long time without disintegrating, the caesarist movement must hurry precisely because of the instability of the cement that holds it together: the libido-charged affectivity. After it has come to power it faces the need of institutionalizing anxiety as a means of preventing the extinction of its affective base by its bureaucratic structure.

The techniques are familiar: propaganda and terror—i.e., the incalculability of sanctions. I do not need to discuss this here. Montesquieu, building on Aristotle and Machiavelli, distinguished between three constitutional and one tyrannical governmental and social system. According to him, monarchy rests on the honor of the monarch; aristocracy, on the moderation of the aristocrats; democracy, on virtue (i.e., with him, patriotism); but tyranny, on fear. It must, however, not be overlooked that every political system is based on anxiety. But there is more than a quantitative difference between the anxiety which is institutionalizd in a totally repressive system and that which is the basis of a half-way liberal one. These are qualitatively different states of affairs. One may perhaps say that the totally repressive system institutionalizes depressive and persecutory anxiety, the halfway liberal system, real anxiety.*

Who does not here think of Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed,* when Stavrogin gives the following piece of advice: "All that business of

* One has to be clear about the fact that a totally repressive system is held together not by neurotic anxiety alone—it depends on keeping this anxiety alive in significant groups—but that material advantages and prestige are equally important.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

titles and sentimentalism is a very good cement, but there is something better; persuade four members of the circle to do for a fifth on the pretence that he is a traitor, and you'll tie them all together with the blood they've shed as though it were a knot. They'll be your slaves, they won't dare to rebel or call you to account." This famous passage in Dostoyevsky is important not only because it verifies our psychological theory, but also because it shows at the same time that the leader activates anxiety through guilt for his own advantage, not for the sake of the led.

If one examines the Spartan example, Stavrogin's advice, the Fehme-murders, and the collective crimes of the SS, one may perhaps undertake the following psychological analysis:

There are anxiety and an unconscious feeling of guilt.

It is the task of the leader, by creating neurotic anxiety, to tie the led so closely to the leader that they would perish without idenification with him. Then the leader orders the commission of crimes; but these are—in accord with the morality that prevails in the group—with the Lacedaemonians, the Nihilists, the SS—not crimes, but fundamentally moral acts. Yet the conscience—the super-ego—protests against the morality of the crimes, for the old moral convictions cannot simply be extirpated. The feeling of guilt is thus repressed and makes anxiety a nearly panicky one, which can be overcome only through unconditional surrender to the leader and compels the commission of new crimes.

This is how I see the connection between anxiety and guilt in a totally repressive society. Hence this anxiety is qualitatively different from the anxiety that is the basis of every political system.

IT IS TIME TO SUMMARIZE our results:

1) Psychological alienation—the alienation of the ego from the instinctual structure, or the renunciation of instinctual gratifications—is inherent in every historical society. It grows with the growth of modern industrial society, and produces anxiety. Anxiety can be protective, destructive, or cathartic.

2) Neurotic, persecutory anxiety can lead to ego-surrender in the mass through affective identification with a leader. This caesaristic identification is always regressive, historically and psychologically.

3) An important clue for the regressive character is the view of history of false concreteness—the conspiracy theory. Its peculiar danger lies in the kernel of truth that is contained in this view of history.

4) The intensification of anxiety into persecutory anxiety is successful when a group (class, religion, race) is threatened by loss of status, without understanding the process which leads to its degradation.

5) Generally, this leads to political alienation, i.e., the conscious rejection of the rules of the game of a political system.

6) The regressive mass movement, once it has come to power must, in order to maintain the leader-identification, institutionalize anxiety. The three methods are: terror, propaganda, and, for the followers of the leader, the crime committed in common.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MERGER AND MONOPOLY IN THE U. S.

Ben B. Seligman

The recent rash of mergers in American industry has once again highlighted the problem of monopoly. Quite the most glamorous corporate marriages have occurred in automobiles, where the overwhelming strength of Chrysler, Ford and General Motors forced Hudson into the arms of Nash, compelled Kaiser to embrace Willys and linked Studebaker with Packard. When automobiles' Big Three got through with their share of the market last year, the six independents were left with a mere 4 per cent of the industry's total output. The ensuing mergers were desperate attempts to hold on to even this small segment of the auto business.

All this represented the crest of the fourth wave of mergers in U.S. history, a fact of which even the literate public does not seem to be especially aware. From 137 in 1949 mergers increased to 822 in 1952 and have since remained close to 800 each year.

The merger is the classic American way of building an industrial empire. In Europe, where the cartel has been usually employed, some concession is made to individual corporate identity. But here business men prefer to buy out their rivals, taking over plants and assets *in toto* and fusing disparate enterprises into new and wonderfully complex organizations. Bringing together plants, financial structures and selling apparatuses, the merger, which is something of an imperative in American capitalism, has largely been made possible by the ineffectiveness of the anti-trust laws. These laws, sufficient for controlling loose arrangements such as trade associations, were unable until 1950 to place any restraint at all on merger activity. A Clayton Act amendment in that year, yet to be tested in the courts, makes mergers which tend "substantially to lessen competition" legally dubious. Of course, the question of how competition is *not* reduced in an industrial combination may not be an easy one for a jurist to decide.*

The word "merger" is a somewhat vague one: it applies not only to combinations in which two or more enterprises are displaced by a new corporate entity but also to the case in which complementary manufacturing processes are brought together. The steel industry offers

* An illustration of this problem was made available by the recent ruling of Federal Judge W. J. LaBuy in dismissing anti-trust charges against DuPont, General Motors and U.S. Rubber. Among other things, this distinguished jurist held that there was no proof that DuPont controlled General Motors even though it was at times voting 51% of the stock voted at stockholders' meetings.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a striking illustration: here coal mines, iron ore fields, foundries and a host of fabricating plants are brought together to provide a continuous manufacturing process from raw material to finished product. The word also has been used to describe common control of such entirely different enterprises as hotels and sugar factories.

THE FIRST GREAT MERGER MOVEMENT took place from about 1898 to 1904. This was the time when the "trusts" were born, giving the language a generic term for all industrial combinations. The trust, it will be recalled, was the device utilized by the Standard Oil Company . In this combine some 40 firms turned over their voting stock to a board of trustees for trust certificates, thus enabling them to control effectively prices and production for the entire group. After it was outlawed by the Supreme Court, a ready substitute was discovered in the holding company, an invention of several crafty corporation lawyers who convinced the New Jersey legislature that it was not an unreasonable legal device.

The underlying factors in this first merger wave were, of course, more basic. A rapidly growing market for mass produced goods irrevocably destroyed the century-old grip of local parochial monopolies; markets became national in scope so that a small merchant or manufacturer might no longer expect to retain leadership at home simply because he held a locational advantage. For this he had to thank the fantastic growth of cheap transportation facilities. In addition, technological advances inexorably increased the ratio of fixed to variable costs. The business man suddenly faced the problem of idle capacity and overhead. The first solution was a price war calculated to destroy his rivals; but this only raised a dilemma, for the ensuing cutthroat competition threatened to wipe out everyone. And so there came a realization that "live and let live" would be the ideal rule. Even better, some thought, would be "living together as one," for then anxieties concerning mavericks who might willy-nilly cut prices could be entirely eliminated.

This first wave of mergers was the greatest in American history and clearly had the most profound impact on subsequent economic growth. An example of the kind of forces that were joined at this time is offered by the spectacular case of the United States Steel Corporation. In 1898, the Minnesota Iron Company, one of the largest iron ore producers in the country, and a large rail and lake carrier as well, merged with Illinois Steel and Lorain Steel to create the Federal Steel Company, which now had 15 per cent of the industry's total ingot capacity. A year later, National Steel was formed out of several other firms, making up 12 per cent of ingot capacity. In 1900, the Carnegie Company of New Jersey took over the Carnegie Steel Works and the H. C. Frick Coke Company, to come up with 18 per cent of national ingot capacity. Then, in 1901, financiers brought all of these together to form U.S. Steel with 45 per cent of the industry's ingot capacity. Yet this was not all. Tossed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into the hopper were certain fabricators: American Tin Plate Company (itself a merger of 36 companies) with 75 per cent of the nation's tin plate capacity; American Steel and Wire, combining 19 companies with 80 per cent of total wire capacity; National Tube Company which had 85 per cent of tubing capacity; American Steel Hoop Company; American Bridge Company; Shelby Steel Tubing; and the Lake Superior Consolidated Iron Mines.

After 1904 the American public, giving vent to its traditional hostility to corporate bigness, began to clamor for a breakup of the trusts. Business men themselves were calling for a temporary halt in empire building, not merely to digest what they had already absorbed, but also to gather strength for the coming economic storms which broke out in 1907. Then came the first World War.

A favorable climate for a second wave of mergers was created by post-war optimism. Professional promoters, discovering that capital was readily available, prepared to turn an easy profit. From 1919 to 1921 mergers were initiated either through holding companies or outright consolidations expressly for the purpose of taking advantage of a bull market in securities. New companies meant new stocks and in a rising market a handsome gain could be easily realized. Insofar as industry itself was concerned, the major motivation for mergers stemmed either from a desire to establish vertical combines, thereby ensuring a regular supply of raw materials or from a need to rationalize sales and marketing operations.

By 1926, the third wave period, a number of new industries had reached a state of economic maturity: motion pictures, public utilities, radios, automobiles. But the business community did not hesitate to subject them to reorganization, combination and merger. Nor did these cease with the onset of the depression. From 1932 to 1938, according to a Federal Trade Commission report, numerous consolidations continued to take place. However, the outstanding feature now was the absorption of small firms by large ones. In the steel industry during this time, firms worth $3 billion in assets swallowed firms worth $217 million; in auto accessories, $377 million in assets took over $28 million; in oil $832 million absorbed $42 million.

Since the end of World War II the FTC has found that there have been about 700 to 800 mergers a year. Between 1940 and 1947 more than 2500 firms with total assets of over $5 billion disappeared. The magnitude of this growing concentration may be more strikingly visualized if we realize that this was 5½ per cent of the total assets in manufacturing industry in 1948. Yet all this was merely a prelude to the wave of mergers that reached its peak in the last two years. Large corporations have been literally hunting for new industrial conquests.

Some recent examples: American President Lines purchased control of the American Mail Line for $5 million; Hilton beat out the fabulous William Zeckendorf for control of the Statler hotel chain

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with an offer of $75 million; Continental Can Corporation bought up five large bag-making factories; the National Lead Company has branched into other metals; Electric Boat got itself into the airplane business by securing control of Consolidated Vultee; Allis-Chalmers took over an engine making firm, the Buda Corporation; Chrysler bought Briggs Manufacturing Co., an auto body maker, thus strengthening itself while at the same time weakening Packard, a one-time Briggs customer; H. Daroff and Sons, one of the largest clothing manufacturers in the country, obtained control of Botany Mills, a textile concern.

One of the most heralded mergers (but not consummated because of government opposition) was that planned between Youngstown Sheet and Tube and the Bethlehem Steel Company. Had this been approved by Justice Department attorneys it would have created an integrated firm with a capitalization of over $2½ billion. Underlying the desire for this merger was the abandonment of the once universal basing-point system. This pricing technique enforced a uniformity that was achieved by adding freight charges to the price of steel at some theoretical mill from the latter point to the place of delivery. Thus, a customer in Chicago would pay the same price as a customer at some distant point despite the fact that the mill might actually be in Gary, close to Chicago, since all prices were calculated "as if" from Pittsburgh. In this way, by calculating prices as from an "originating" point plus freight, all firms were able to compete on a roughly equal footing in the same market.

Today, the FOB mill pricing system is used, so that firms are able to develop a territorial advantage. Bethlehem Steel can no longer compete with Inland Steel in the midwest. Production facilities in the industry have become more and more market oriented. But Youngstown Sheet and Tube does own 2½ million tons of capacity in East Chicago; the proposed merger therefore would have placed Bethlehem Steel on an equal footing with Inland Steel in the Chicago market. This was one of the few instances where the Federal government hesitated to approve a merger; and so Inland Steel still has the upper hand in the midwest.

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT BUSINESS MEN welcome mergers. Pious expressions of faith in the Smithian unseen hand notwithstanding, rigorous price competition remains the bane of their existence. Said the *Magazine of Wall Street* last year:

> "Mergers are part of a national trend that demands greater integration and a higher degree of efficiency in operation if our industries are to further develop . . . and supply this nation which within the next five years will have a population of 175 million people who will need and want what industries turn out today along with many new products to be developed by research and made available through technological developments."

The urge to monopolize is not the sole motive drive in mergers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Frequently a profitable firm will buy up unprofitable ones in order to save taxes through balancing acquired losses against accumulated gains. This was a powerful factor in the Kaiser-Willys get-together. In at least 10 per cent of the mergers of small firms the tax element is predominant, while this holds true for at least 25 per cent of the large firms. In addition, older firms will purchase younger ones in order to take over new inventions and ideas. Retirement often will be something of a factor in merger sales. Yet whatever the immediate reason, the basic acquisitive urge is to achieve a dominant position in the trade. The merger movement is basically a struggle for greater market strength and, larger profit, with personal ambition playing a not insignificant role.

Sometimes the motive for a merger is euphemistically described as diversification or the need for having a fuller line of products. Thus, General Mills, a food processor, entered the home appliance field and more recently took over a small sponge manufacturing concern. International Shoe acquired the Florsheim retail chain. RCA purchased Estate Stove, giving it a connection with gas ranges and heaters: these are doubtlessly natural neighbors for TV sets in retail shops. The absorption of the American Broadcasting Company by Paramount might be said to have been an effort to overcome technological competition. At any rate, ABC was helped immeasurably by the additional capital that Paramount was able to bring into the combine. And so, 600 theatres, six radio stations and five TV stations joined a network of over 300 affiliates in radio and 76 in TV. Avco Manufacturing Company, a creation of Victor Emanuel, one of the country's shrewdest financiers, originally made airplanes, but now it handles household appliances, engines, boilers and castings. While all this vertical integration does improve stock marketability and often enables a firm to secure working capital more easily, it also tends to create monopolistic industrial structures.

The small firm is frequently willing to let itself be hooked because the bait is so attractive. Small firms while having a good saleable product may have insufficient working capital. The merger of General Mills and O-Cel-O, the sponge company alluded to above, is a case in point. The latter, whose annual sales approximated $3½ million compared with GM's yearly gross of $480 million, was founded by three young men, previously DuPont engineers, who within a few years had built up a fairly respectable business. When they finally allowed themselves to be taken over, they were given 30,000 shares of General Mills stock. This was about 1.4 per cent of the total, a significant chunk in a company where the largest single block was but 4 per cent. The profit on the deal amounted to $1700 for every $100 originally invested and was subject to tax at capital gains rates, which are considerably lower than ordinary income levies.

THAT CONCENTRATION IN INDUSTRY is intensified by such mergers would seem to be self evident. George Stigler, a fairly conserva-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tive economist, said in 1950 that not one steel company had been able to add as much as 4 per cent of ingot capacity through attracting new customers, implying thereby that the greatest part of growth was to be explained by merger, consolidation and asset purchase. This authoritative statement notwithstanding, there have been several studies in recent years which sought to deny this relationship. Two economists, John Lintner and J. K. Butters, have argued in their "Effect of Mergers on Industrial Concentration, 1940-1947" (*Review of Economics and Statistics,* February, 1950) that no correlation between mergers and concentration could be demonstrated. Limiting their survey to manufacturing and mining, they concluded that small companies actually did better in mergers than large ones. They admitted that between 1940 and 1947 over 2500 firms disappeared as a result of mergers, but nevertheless insisted that this form of combination was not an important source of corporate growth. Examining only the size of the companies involved in mergers, they made the remarkable discovery that the percentage growth in assets during the period was smaller for the large companies. To anyone familiar with the mathematics of percentage calculation this should not be surprising, nor is it especially meaningful, for ratios must necessarily be smaller in the group with the larger arithmetical base. What is interesting is the admission by Lintner and Butters that the larger companies were more active in the merger movement: they found that not only was the proportion of companies acquiring one or more outside firms larger in the big company group but that the average number of acquisitions per acquiring firm was higher for the large companies.

As the FTC later demonstrated, the large companies, that is, those with assets over $10 million, accounted for 63 per cent of the number of acquisitions and 76 per cent of the total amount of assets bought. Furthermore, the Lintner-Butters study was based on data derived only from companies actually involved in mergers, thus omitting the many small firms that had not taken part in the combination movement. This method in effect understated the activity of the large firms by making it seem that a relatively large number of small firms comprised the bulk of merged companies. FTC economists were quite correct when they argued that Lintner and Butters should have related their statistics not merely to the affected firms but to the whole complex of industry. For the 1940-1947 period the following data suggest a picture quite different from that painted by Lintner and Butters:

Size of Buying Firm	*Percent of Acquisitions*	*Value of Acquired Firms*	
		Millions	*Per Cent*
Under $5 million	24.5	$ 451.3	13.9
$5 - 10 million	12.8	330.2	10.1
Over $10 million	62.7	2473.6	76.0

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WOULD OUTRIGHT PROHIBITION of mergers have any effect? Probably not, for centralized control of prices and production would doubtless be attained in some other manner. American industrial history demonstrates at least this much. The alternative, it is said, is to control mergers through a judicious enforcement of the anti-trust laws. The FTC and the Justice Department assert that they have nipped in the bud dozens of proposed mergers that would have been monopolistic. This is done under the 1950 Celler Amendment to the Clayton Act, which requires that business show that a merger will be in the public interest and will not substantially reduce competition. Yet the simple fact is that aside from an occasional Bethlehem Steel case, present-day mergers continue their merry way.

Under the New Deal industrial concentration was viewed with a certain amount of undefined horror. Government lawyers said that competition was healthy and monopoly bad for the body politic. This outlook, accepted by the great assortment of liberals that gathered under FDR's banner, created a certain feeling of kinship with the American radical tradition. Soon Thurman Arnold, who in an early book had lightly dismissed anti-trust action as folklorist whimsy, began to wave the big stick. From 1938 to 1941, Arnold, as head of the Anti-Trust Division of the Justice Department, chased monopolies with headlines and large appropriations. He even broadened the traditional approach by pursuing such non-commercial enterprises as the Associated Press and the American Medical Association.

Did all this furious activity ever alter anything? The answer is, no! There is little proof that governmental action reduced concentration in any sensible way; on the contrary, monopoly in the widest sense seems to have increased despite the close concern of the government. All that could be said is that legal action or the threat of legal action influenced the shape that mergers assumed (that is, asset *vs.* stock purchase or outright amalgamation *vs.* integration). Little effect was exerted on prices, output or employment policy. Whatever the form, there is an undeniable tendency toward control from the center. In many ways, this is due to the legal philosophy that underlies anti-trust; all too often real collusion or behavior close to conspiracy must be demonstrated. Yet price maintenance and restricted production may be achieved without collusion. Price leadership, "moral suasion" and mutual understanding among giant rivals, are all acknowledged social forms for obtaining monopolistic control, yet in such instances it is virtually impossible to discover conspiracy within the meaning of the law.

The simple fact is that anti-trust has been a dismal failure. The Sherman Act was emasculated by judicial interpretation; by 1920 it was useless. The Clayton Act fared no better—though how well the teeth that were inserted by the 1950 amendment will work remains to be seen. The only thing that could be said for anti-trust was that it inhibited outright monopoly; business tycoons thought it the better

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

part of discretion to let a few small rivals stay put. Some writers feel that changes in corporation law, taxes and the patent system may create incentives for industrial giants to disgorge their subsidiaries. Whatever the merit of these notions, they are at best palliatives, since the hardening tendency that the merger movement implies continues unabated.

WHATEVER SHAPE MONOPOLY MAY TAKE, the social costs are essentially the same. Mergers, patent control, cartels, price leadership all tend to create higher prices, a lower level of output, wastage of resources, and excessive profits. Easy entry into an industry, one of the prime requirements of competition, at least in textbooks, is severely circumscribed. The monopolists (if we want to be technical, we might call them oligopolists) will employ whatever means are necessary to keep out newcomers, as witness the attempt of the auto industry to keep out Kaiser-Frazer just after the war. In these ways maximum control of market and production is incessantly sought.

One argument in favor of combination hinges on the ostensible heightening of industrial efficiency. However, if this is to be defined as the lowest possible cost level, then it can be demonstrated that such is not always the outcome. The elimination of troublesome competitors is often motivated more by high profit considerations than by the desire for low cost. In 1947 John M. Blair, a Federal Trade Commission economist, presented fairly conclusive evidence to show that combinations did not bring about decreased costs. Whatever gain large corporations made, he said, was in the purchase of materials. This substantiated in the main the arguments of Arthur S. Dewing, a noted economist of the Twenties, who showed at that time that profits after a merger were all too frequently lower than for the total of the previously independent companies. And whatever the other advantages ascribed to monopoly, such as specialization or the ability to use by-products, it must be clear by now that these are derived from the technical features of large scale production, rather than from combination *per se*.

Nor do mergers necessarily increase economic stability, as Schumpeter once intimated. It is not often realized that this sort of corporate stability frequently becomes rigidity. The burden of excess capacity may make it difficult to adjust to changing economic situations. The reaction to altered conditions is made not through reduced prices but through curtailed production, thereby effectively shifting the burden of the ensuing idle capacity on to that part of the population least able to bear it, while investment possibilities are determined by the shifting strategy of maintaining market control.

Many of these socio-economic phenomena are obscured by the current post-war prosperity. But should the pressures of an exacerbated international political crisis be relaxed, the underlying drives will tend to assert themselves and then the economic sclerosis toward which the current merger movement contributes will be exposed to full view.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In January 1953, Asoka Mehta, one of the leaders of the Indian Praja Socialist Party, published a pamphlet—really a little book—entitled Socialism and Peasantry. *In this study Mehta tried to find an answer to the most difficult and important question facing all Asians: Is there an indigenous and democratic way for the people of Asia to raise their economic level without succumbing to traditional imperialism, Russian domination, or yielding to new absolutisms?*

We present in this and the forthcoming issue of DISSENT *two sections of his pamphlet, which form independent articles. For reasons of space a good deal of supporting statistical data has been eliminated; a few minor grammatical changes have been made. The study was originally written in English, and the style and language have not been tampered with.—The Editors.*

CAN ASIA INDUSTRIALIZE DEMOCRATICALLY?

Asoka Mehta

Recently, a newspaperwoman said to me: "When I am in England I feel like a Conservative, in Italy I feel like a Socialist, in India I feel like a Communist." When asked what she meant by this, she explained that the need for change in India was so pressing that only a regime ruthless, determined and full of drive, could grapple with the immensity of the problem.

The naivete of the young lady is widely shared. R. H. S. Crossman, in the *New Fabian Essays,* has advised Western socialists to "accept both intellectually and emotionally the fact that Communism outside Europe is still a liberative force." That other alternatives are not available is further made clear in his next paragraph. "Outside this limited area (of West Europe and North America), in this present century, the social conditions for a bourgeois revolution are not present, and that is why, in the absence of any alternate instrument of modernization, Communism often becomes the chosen instrument of history."

Because of ossified and stubborn difficulties, "the chosen instrument of history" for development has to have a sharp point and decisive thrust. Communism, with its distinctive theory and organization,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is believed to have the requisite point and thrust. The Communists believe that power is social, is generated in the course of all types of action (not simply the narrowly "political") and is latent in all institutions. They view politics as omnipresent. As a consequence they have discovered and utilized vast new areas of political potential in institutions and mass organizations.

This unceasing and unbounded struggle, associated with the politicalization of every facet of society, gives the Communists the following advantages:

(1) By co-ordinating initiative in diverse organizations, like a party, trade union, a cooperative or a family unit, operational effectiveness is much heightened;

(2) The co-ordination leads to mobilization of social energy; the provision of a decisive focal point and the ironing out of pluralist, individualist, luxuriant variations, give social energy a precise channelization;

(3) The co-ordination leads to the need for, and the emergence of, professional men with the controls ever moving upwards. This tendency is welcomed and developed by the organizational pattern of Communism: since Lenin the party is a *combat organization* built on *cadres* controlled from above. Its organizational philosophy is that of hegemony.

(4) When such a combat party meets the stream of energy extracted from *every recess* of social activity that has been channeled in the needed direction a sort of social hydropower emerges. The combat party is the turbine, the social energy drawn out by politicalizing every branch of activity is the rushing stream, and the two together produce the mighty force needed for transformation. By treating the whole society as a source of power and by developing a hierarchical organization, the Communists build a new instrument of history. Implicit in this is their freedom from limitations of the Rule of Law or constitutional safeguards. Such total power, it is argued, can become a vital force.

It is taken as axiomatic that democracy cannot grow in underdeveloped countries. The recent developments in India, Burma, Ceylon and Indonesia demand a revision of this view. Democracy breaks down in some Asian countries, not because of under-development but because of the fact that imperialist powers loosen their grip only by reducing the countries concerned to shambles. Where peaceful withdrawals have been made, as in India, Ceylon, or the Gold Coast, the prospects for democracy have been better than for totalitarianism.

THE INDUSTRIAL BASE IN ASIAN COUNTRIES is very narrow: total industrial capital in China in 1939 amounted to just 1,200 million

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(U.S.) dollars, while in India, industrial capital in the same year was a little over 2,000 million dollars.

The resources cannot come from the industrial sector alone. Either there has to be foreign aid or the peasant has to pay. . . .

The Soviet pattern of development, wherein concentrated efforts are made to construct the heavy base of industry at the very start, cannot appeal to the peasant. In the Soviet Union, the ratio of industrial production as between consumption goods and capital goods was changed, almost abruptly, from 2.3:1 to 0.88:1 in less than five years—1928-1932. In twelve years—1928-40—industrial output increased seven to eight-fold, but in the sector of heavy industries. This needed the integration of the peasant into the total economy. The peasant resisted the integration and the results are writ large in history. From a careful analysis of Russian population figures made for the League of Nations, Dr. Lorimer concludes that there were some five million abnormal deaths in 1930's. More than half of these perished in the process of collectivization. The rest disappeared in the mortality associated with an unprecedented rate of industrialization and in political purges.

It is not the vast human misery that I want to point to, but the reasons for it and the results.

Concentration on heavy industry not only needs large capital but also causes an inflationary pressure. Expenditure is not balanced by production that comes to the market. Steel factories and hydroelectric plants not only take a long time to construct, but even a longer time to "mature" and to yield consumption goods. During that period, the peasant, owning his little piece of land, is unlikely to remain docile. The peasant will exchange his foodgrains and raw materials only if he gets the goods he needs. He mostly needs consumption goods. If they are scarce or rationed, he will have little incentive to produce. . . .

Stalin, through collectivization and mechanization, not only increased production, released men from agriculture for urban industrial activities, but was able to gain a hold over the agricultural produce that millions of scattered farms never gave him. The collectives were not owned by the peasants, and the machines needed were available only from the State, *on terms offered by the State.* The peasant was thus deprived of his instruments of production, was *proletarianized;* then alone could the needed surplus value be drawn out of him.

WHY CANNOT A DETERMINED DICTATORSHIP repeat this achievement in an Asian country? The reasons are clear:

(1) On the top of the needs of industrialization it cannot add the effort of mechanization of agriculture (as a general policy), because that would mean significantly raising the demand for capital, and making the problem of capital accumulation insoluble;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(2) If farms are not mechanized, mere collectivization not only becomes difficult but does not yield that hold over the peasant's produce. So long as he can till with his own means of production, he cannot be easily mulcted of his produce;

(3) In the Soviet Union, as in the U.S.A., vast expanse of land, much of it virgin, facilitated mechanization of agriculture. Where there is a scope for *extensive* agriculture, these methods yield results. In Asian countries, virgin lands are generally non-existent, the development here has to be in the *intensive* direction;

(4) The pressure on land is so great that collectivization and mechanization would throw such vast masses of people out of occupation and out of their traditional social milieu as cannot be absorbed in industries or the urban milieu;

(5) The smallness of agricultural holdings increases the proportions of the uprooting involved, and the resistance of the peasants is likely to be more violent.

Such a terrific transformation would involve the destruction of many millions of men, and would raise such vast problems of adjustments that no dictatorship would be able to master them. . . .

The Soviet pattern suffers from two fatal flaws. The first is its obsession with the technology capitalism developed. "The USSR is the only country in the world today which continuously progresses towards the adoption of the newest and the most advanced techniques in all fields," proudly observes Leontiev, a Soviet economist . . . It is forgotten that the use of such a technology involves the greatest "load" on capital, and economizes, to the vanishing point, the most abundant resource in an under-developed country, labor.

The second error lies in over-emphasizing the tendency to concentration. "Ordinarily," wrote Prof. Frank Knight, "economic forces tend towards a progressive concentration." The Marxian edifice was built upon that basic tendency. But the Communists have sought to discover it where it does not exist. Their political set-up is expected to make up for the lack of necessary economic integration in under-developed countries. But the strain of forced concentration, political or economic, can become so severe, that the development snaps. That is the inescapable danger in Asia. When it is realized that almost 80 per cent of farms in India are under 5 acres, and in China, the average size of a holding, even in 1935, was 2.4 acres, and that in Japan 92 per cent of farms and in Java 71 per cent are under 3 acres, collectivization and mechanization forfeit their *raison d'etre.*

If the industrial sector alone develops technologically and agriculture is allowed to remain as it is, severe strains emerge between the rationalized and traditional sectors.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The disharmony between the two sectors was resolved, in Soviet Russia, as in Western countries generally, by drawing the agrarian sector into the industrial sweep. Both are mechanized through capitalization. Where such a road is not open—because of three stubborn and irreducible difficulties, (1) paucity of capital, (2) abundance of human labor, and (3) low land-man ratio—the Communists have produced no answer.

If the old *relations* of production are unsuited to the needs of the Asian people, and imperialists and capitalists who strive to perpetuate them spell barbarism, so also the *forces* of production envisaged by the Communists are fundamentally disruptive of the social existence of the Asian people. That tempo and that path can mean only disaster for them. To Asia, Communism, wedded to a particular *force* of production, can be a vehicle of barbarism in the same way in which capitalism is because of its obsolete relations of production. Those whose thoughts are shaped by the experiences and ideologies of the West find it difficult to grasp this simple fact. For Asian socialists its recognition is the beginning of wisdom.

Cannot foreign aid get over the difficulty? It can, but what is the source of foreign aid? The Soviet Union is not among the top eight countries of the world that have between them 56 per cent of the world's income. It comes in the second bracket, where 34 per cent of the world's population has 34 per cent of the world's income. The tremendous task of mechanizing its agriculture, simultaneously with industrialization, has been shouldered by that country. Can the further burden of Asian development be added to it? The fact that so far Russia's aid to China has amounted to only $300,000,000 provides the answer.

The tension between nations has diverted much of capitalization and industrialization of economy to military ends. In Russia and in Japan, the vast expansion in heavy industry has not led, even after a long time lag, to the production of vastly increasing consumption goods. In both countries, austerity continues. The capital base of the economy has been used, to a great extent, for military preparedness. That "leak" makes roundabout production more involved without yielding sufficient end product: consumer goods.

The Communists have always believed in power and the strength of military might. While superhuman sacrifices may have brought Russia in that realm to the level of Western nations, realizing the much greater leeway that has now to be made up and the woefully limited resources from which the Asians have to start, can India or China or Indonesia ever hope to reach and overtake the West in military might? The stern logic of facts directs Asian countries towards a policy not just of peace but of non-violence. That is the price of their survival.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But non-violence outside and tensions inside cannot go together. This is yet another contradiction that Communism faces in Asia.

The Communist method, if it suits anyone, is suited to the needs of the intermediate countries—those in the belt of 34 per cent of the world's population earning 34 per cent of the world's income. For submerged, depressed Asia the path is as barren of significant achievements as capitalism, because both refuse to temper technology with sociological realities.

AFTER MARX, SOCIALIST ECONOMICS AS SUCH has failed to develop; there has been more embroidering on the thought of the master than reweaving of the fabric. Let us take a recent publication, Prof. G. D. H. Cole's *Socialist Economics*. His twelve postulates of Socialist Economics have no relevance to the problems socialists of three-fourths of the world are called upon to resolve. The postulates are partly vague, and mainly drawn up to serve the needs of Western socialists. The crucial problems of economic transformation are not even in the wings of discussion in the suburbs of thought.

Where the Western socialists have been so negligent, we have no right to expect better insight from professional economists. More and more, with the development of equilibrium economics, the economists have been preoccupied with problems of developed economy. The tendency reaches its fruition in Keynes whose theories uncover the danger of savings outrunning investments, of consumption not rising fast enough. However vitally significant these theories may have been to the West, to Asia they are intellectual adornments, not practical tools.

The Western economists have given deep thought to problems of economic change. Even of static theory, Prof. Lindahl has said, that "properly interpreted, static theory also (i.e. like dynamic theory) has for an object economic developments taking place in time, only the variables studied do not change their values with the lapse of time." About dynamic adjustments, the best minds—from Malthus to Schumpeter and Ohlin—have written, but their conception of economic development comes very close to the complex of ideas brought together by business cycles theories. It is development within the framework of Western life and experience. The wider, difficult and fascinating problems of the transformation of a backward country into an advanced economy have received scant attention. We say this not to criticize or to condemn, but to point to an additional difficulty . . .

The earlier economists dealt with a world with which the Asians find point of contact: there are vistas of thought that have for them familiar resemblance. Thus, while New Economics is learned, Old Economics is understood.

The pre-eminence of Marx lies in his informing economics with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sociological understanding. His is the one grand edifice of thought that provides rolling vision, and is dynamic to the core. For him, *change* is the essence not of life alone, but of logic too. What wonder if Marx has emerged as the supreme teacher of social dreamers and social engineers of Asia?

In the preface to the first volume of *Capital,* Marx wrote: "The industrially developed country only shows the less developed country the picture of its future." That was the fatal mistake. For Asia, because of the unequal development of the world that capitalism achieves, there is no scope, no hope, of realizing the lineaments of a developed country. And once people realize that the future can be shaped, once not just the philosophers but the people know that history need no longer be *interpreted* but can be *changed,* the multitudes of Asia, the peasants may not want to seek, and accept, the transformation that spells the extinction of their way of life, and of their distinctive place in society. The power of the Asian peasant turning away from the portrait in the mirror will become apparent as imperialism retreats from Asia and democratic advances are made. Apart from the inclinations of the peasants, the fact remains that for Asian countries to achieve the visage of the West is just not possible. The difference in their *per capita* income is 1 : 30 and the flux of time and techniques will widen the margin. When the Asian Marxists see the future in Moscow, if not in New York, they are like Dorian Gray—the picture shaping in the attic of real life being a travesty of the one on "show."

A theory of economic development suited to the needs and claims of Asia has to satisfy two conditions: (1) it must work out the transformation, spell the stages wherein the agrarian chrysalis changes into a semi-industrial butterfly; and (2) it must provide latitude for more than one picture of the developed society. It must sketch the various phases of "the middle term" of transformation, but leave scope for variations for "the final term." In a sense, it has to be scientific not only about the middle term, but also refrain, unlike Marxism, from being utopian about the final term. It cannot sugar-coat the bitterness of transformation with the honey-filled visions of the future. Precision about the middle term with openness about the final term has to be the hall-mark of the theory.

To DEVELOP SUCH A THEORY is the responsibility of the socialist movement as a whole; we can offer here only tentative suggestions.

The first fact to be noted is that not only the *degree,* but the *form* of industrialization is variable.

The form will be different because of the difference in basic conditions. "Any increase in investment activity in backward areas will

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have to be accompanied by a severe check on the propensity to consume. The process of capital formation is a long and arduous one: The more backward the economy and the larger the population the more time consuming is the process."* It needs to be realized that backwardness and population pressure might converge to a point where austerity becomes too arduous, where new forms *have* to be discovered. The young Indian scholar has posed a dilemma: "Thus the choice in the developing stage may well be between larger employment at very low levels of real income or partial employment at greater aggregrate real income. The latter policy may lead the systems to a greater aggregate real income after the lapse of a certain period." The dilemma does not exist. But it needs to be remembered that in an under-developed country there are different *levels* of production, employment and income. For each level, there are different limits of full employment. . . .

In the peasant sector of economy, land distribution, village oriented economy and voluntary labor for rural public works, would provide opportunities for full employment. In handicrafts, better tools, adequate raw materials, co-operatives for credit and marketing and protection against developed industries would provide increased and secure employment. In developed industries, in so far as *that* sector is concerned, the Keynesian multiplier would work. Each level has to seek its appropriate "full employment."

The more difficult question is how to raise the level, to lift the bottom? Before the question is answered, it needs to be realized that as water, at a higher level, inundates lower levels, so higher levels of production "flood" production at lower levels of technique. Industrial imperialism lived upon its colonies through this power to inundate lower levels of production. Such "flooding" destroys the economy with its employment, income, production and joys and sorrows of men and appropriates resources for the expansion of the technically superior sector. Before the problem of raising the level is solved, the threat of "flooding" has to be attended to. The solution lies in Prof. Dantwala's brilliant suggestion of "technological locks." The flow of technique, like the flood of a river, has to be *trained.*

MARX HAD SAID, IN HIS FAMOUS DISCUSSION on "consolidation" in the third volume of the *Capital,* that big capitalists were eager to expropriate the small ones in order to compensate for the falling *rate* of profit by an increment in the *mass* of profit obtained from larger centralization. Is the tendency to expand at the expense of small producers an expression of capitalism, or also of technological develop-

* P. R. Brahmananda in *The General Theory and the Problem of Development of Backward Areas.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment? On this point followers of Marx have never offered clarification.

The development needs to be "envisioned in its entirety." In such a perspective the following "steps" have to be worked out: (1) production of the developed sector has to be prevented from flooding the lower levels; (2) new techniques have to be evolved to suit the investing capacity and employment requirements of different levels; and (3) use the surplus output of higher levels to raise the bottom of production. For each level there obviously will be partial or full employment, and the aims of economic policy would be to reach as close to full employment at different levels as possible. For different levels, different equations might be needed; to bring them together into in enveloping theory is the task of Socialist Economics. In this fascinating work, technicians, scientists and economists from all lands have to cooperate. In knowledge there need be no fear of flooding!

How far will the levels rise, is there any need for stabilization? Stalin envisages not only sharp lifting of the bottom, but raising up all levels to a uniform surface. That is why for him "the entry of the peasant into a *Kolkhoz* (collective) does not make him a socialist." Even then the peasant retains vestiges of capitalism in his psychology. Only the long and stern discipline of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the pressure of rationalized technique will transform the peasant, and proletariat, into a member of the classless commonwealth.

The assumption is that technology is capable of all triumphs. We do not share this assumption. The position of different levels is determined by the available resources. Technique has to conform to resources; it is true that technical advance augments resources, but the generating technique is always conditioned by the limiting resources. To evolve techniques suited to resources available at different levels of production is to achieve social transformation economically. The technique may function on multi-lateral levels, but its total expression is circumscribed by the resources: if too much is sucked up by the higher levels, the lower levels get disrupted—starvations and deaths ensue.

In Asian countries the general level is likely to remain far below that of the USA, though steel mills, in their limited capacity, may become as modern as in the U.S. As against Stalin's dream of a seamless surface of uniformly advanced technique, Asian countries might achieve, and perhaps prefer, a many-leveled structure, with appropriate links and locks. The problem of "intervening occupations" appears to be integral for Asian economy. The unfinished task is to fabricate tools and machines appropriate to the lesser levels.

But how about foreign aid?

As tensions develop inside a country between rationalized and primitive sectors of economy, so in the world tensions arise between developed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and undeveloped countries. As in a truly progressive society the higher sector would aid the lower to raise its level, so the much developed countries would help the backward. As Walter Reuther, president of the CIO, has suggested, a tax of 2 per cent on the national income of the Western countries may be necessary. Such aid however needs to be related to the capacity of, and offered in forms suited to, the receiving countries. R. H. S. Crossman speculated on the theoretical possibility of a crusading imperialism industrializing a backward country and "thereby liberating the masses from localized enslavement to the soil and to the nature."

In Manchuria, Japan, without the philanthropic purpose, sought the transformation from above. In 1930, Manchuria was still "in most ways a typical Asian country . . . In a short dozen years Japan took Manchukuo through the whole course of Western industrialization, a course which had required half a century in Japan herself." This transformation was accomplished by pouring in vast capital: "By 1945 total investment may have reached 500,000,000 pounds—40 per cent of Japan's national income. It had taken Great Britain, greatest of overseas lenders, a century to lend an amount equal to her 1938 income."

Yet this *tour de force* left Manchuria weaker at the base: "The peasant indeed actually lost by a decade of Japanese development. Production of crops went down . . . Population went up . . . demands on the peasants went up . . . The defeat of Japan in 1945 afforded a unique opportunity of studying the peasant's own reaction to the whole process of industrialization."* The reaction was hostile. Economic development is a matter of social integration and not just capital investment.

Foreign aid has to be controlled by sociological understanding and technological innovations; capital-saving, as against the traditional labor-saving. Such a complex of relationships cannot be achieved between just the lending and the receiving countries. A World Organization alone can handle the task. A World Development Authority, financed with one or two per cent "tax" on the national income of developed countries and functioning through its panels of sociologists, anthropologists and technicians, has to emerge to smooth the tensions between the rich and the poor in the comity of nations.

THE POLITICAL ORGANIZATION of an under-developed country greatly affects its pattern of development. In Japan modern economic organization was grafted on feudal social organization. "There the archaic kinship forms and hierarchical order of society were not disrupted by the introduction of industry; on the contrary, they were strengthened and given an elaborate ideological overlay as a part of the

* Maurice Zinkin: *Asia and the West.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

policy of economic transition by deliberate plan and control."* The result was not so much social transformation, as superimposing "a feudalism of gold" on the feudalism of land.

In the Soviet Union, the rule of the bureaucracy has distorted the development.

If integrated development is to be achieved, different sectors of economy must be democratically organized. Functional and territorial democracy is the pre-requisite of an economic transformation that is built upon the willing cooperation of the people, particularly the peasant. If democracy is to survive in an Asian country, it will have to advance farther and fast. Multi-levelled economy can be operated effectively only with enveloping democracy.

Developed countries have usually moved towards encroachment on backward economies. This has been known as the development of capitalism into imperialism. To gain advantage among competing capitalisms vast military might is built up. An increasing percentage of growing wealth is sucked up to become the sinews of war. Military strength helps to bring behind developed technology a wider base. Technology develops the *depth* of the economy, war extends the *width*. Even in the Soviet Union, where the share of the country in the world's industrial production increased from 4.7 per cent in 1928 to 10 per cent in 1940, a substantial part of the extra 6 per cent was diverted to military strength. The result was that after the war, an additional 6 per cent of industrial production of the world was appropriated through the expansion of the Soviet sphere. Modern states seek to divert the gains of development in depth for advantages in width.

One Asian country, Japan, tried the gamble and lost. No other Asian country can hope to compete with the West in the arena of war. For us the width is given, only the depth can be developed. So, the Asian countries should be pacifist. Wasting their substance on military preparation is futile and foolish. The justice prevailing in their social life, the allegiance that economic changes evoke among the people to the land, the discipline people develop through democracy—these will be the bulwark of strength against aggression. The poor must learn to live on faith.

Only by fusing intellect with conscience can we grow. Asian socialism will fail if it permits a respect for power to become an admiration for power *qua* power, if it transforms expediency into a virtue. Its strength lies in humane enthusiasm for generous aims. In Rammamohar Lohia's words, economic aims and general aims have to grow together; to telescope them one after the other is to court disaster.

* Wilbert E. Moore, *Industrialization and Labor.*

(*To be continued in next issue of* DISSENT)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AMERICAN NOTEBOOK Some Brief Comments On the Domestic Scene

1. Problems of Labor Unity

The re-unification of the CIO and AFL, after twenty long years, will send hopes soaring in the battered House of Labor. The word "unity" has a magic which deeply affects not only the man at the lathe but his intellectual friend as well. It conjures a picture of a strong, single-minded labor movement battering down the pillars of poverty and making its voice resound through the halls of Congress.

Much will undoubtedly be gained. CIO and AFL will no longer have to "consult," nor to bicker, for united action; the two groups will work through one executive committee and speak with one voice. In suggesting amendments to the Taft-Hartley law, for example, the united federation will not stumble about as at present, with the AFL proposing changes that help the building trades primarily, and the CIO proposing others of a contradictory kind. Multiply this by scores of lobbying activities, by the thousands of local actions, and it adds up to something of substance. The joining of research staffs, educational committees, political action forces, foreign affairs groups; the merging of newspapers and magazines; the elimination of overlaps in organizing staffs—these too are gains. Many people will be released for other activities; much *can* be done.

Reunification is a defensive measure, born of internal and external fears, essentially aimed at regaining some stature in the political arena. Internally Reuther has his steelworker McDonald, threatening to "take a walk"; Meany has his teamster Beck, still a big question mark. Externally there is the mounting pressure from Washington, the conversion of the National Labor Relations Board into a virtual management instrument, the prosecution of quite a few union officials (mostly bad, but a few good), the "right to work" laws in one-third of the states and threatening to spread further. These and other threats hastened the marriage, and if unity can change things somewhat it will be all to the good.

But we should not be mesmerized by the idea of unity. In its contemplated form it is rudimentary indeed. In fact, if more were attempted at this particular moment the schism would unquestionably remain. For what is being united is the two national federations, not the actual unions. AFL and CIO are essentially lobbying bodies, with no mandatory rights over

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their 144 national affiliates. Each of these latter is an autonomous body of its own, with the right to decide its own dues, call its own strikes, negotiate its own contracts, discipline its own members. AFL can not instruct the AFL machinists on when or how or if to conduct a strike; the machinists international union is the true power center—along with 109 other such centers in the AFL and 34 in the CIO. What is now being united is *not* these power centers. It is hoped that rival organizations come together at some time in the future—that AFL electrical workers and CIO electrical workers merge, that the rival chemical, retail, packinghouse unions amalgamate. It is hoped but this is far, far from certain.

The two lobbying bodies will now live under one name (though there will be a special department for industrial unions to be called CIO). They will weld together the staffs; they will federate the city and state central bodies. But these are distinctly secondary forces and distinctly secondary functions. The merging of the power centers may take years—perhaps it will never come.

THE TRUE TEST OF "UNITY" is not whether the federations merge, but whether labor achieves what we have always called "solidarity." Will unity mean that no union member will cross the picket line of another union? That would be a gain for the labor movement revolutionary in scope. It would herald the organization of millions of white collar workers, retail employees, the whole South. It would strengthen weak union groups, would close the gap between the 75c an hour worker in the unorganized fields and the $3.50 rates in the building trades.

Such solidarity is truly a consummation devoutly to be wished. Even within the present AFL and CIO solidarity is practiced more in the breach than the observance. Solidarity is no longer a labor principle, it is a mere tactical arrangement between union leaders. When these leaders like (or need) each other they respect picket lines; otherwise they don't. There is no doubt, for instance, that the AFL teamsters would walk through a picket line of the AFL retail clerks in Los Angeles—and probably elsewhere. Relations between Dave Beck and the Clerks' leadership are at the needle point. Everyone remembers the two-year typographical union strike in Chicago where literally dozens of other AFL unions cheerfully marched through the ITU lines each day. Mere "unity" within one federation has not in the recent past been a guarantee of solidarity, and there is no immediate hope that this will change in the unified federation.

Nor does unity promise more rank and file participation, higher social consciousness, the demise of business unionism and racketeering. Unity *can* be the beginning of these things; it can also merely pyramid the current sterile centralization of power. It is certainly no cure-all, no assurance of greater numbers or future victories.

As a matter of fact schism rather than unity has most frequently aided the labor movement. It was the break in the 1880's between the simple unionists around Samuel Gompers and the "uplift" Knights of Labor that ushered in the larger and more stable AFL. In our own time the birth of CIO within the AFL led not to the decimation but to a resounding growth of unionism. Minority movements have generally propped labor's principles,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

forced old line leaderships to put up a better battle. The Chicago syndicalists of 1886 stiffened the backbone of the simple unionists in the fight for an 8-hour day. Eugene Debs' American Railway Union and the Wobblies were pressures on the powers-that-be in the labor movement that resulted in benefits for the rank and file. And CIO's split from AFL *forced* the older federation to accept what it had so bitterly fought—industrial unionism. The AFL unions that have grown—outside of the building trades—are precisely those, like the teamsters and machinists, which have accepted industrial unionism. Unity on the other hand can act as a catalyst for conservatism; Mike Quill of the CIO transport union is one of the people who has seen, and spoken, of this danger.

Many newspapers have hesitated to endorse the Miami agreement because it might—they say—lead to an independent labor party. As it happens, the leaders who effectuated this merger want nothing but to attach themselves more firmly to the Democratic Party machine. Walter Reuther's famous CIO convention speech in which he renounced not only a third party today but even for the future, was a clear turn towards the right, an accommodation to his new partner. What is expected by the unifiers is more jobs in the Labor Department, a choice of Labor Department officials, personnel in the National Labor Relations Board and a dozen other plums. What is expected is a little political pressure to help at the bargaining table—as was the case under Roosevelt and Truman. All this adds up to greater *dependence on, a firmer alliance with,* the Democratic machine, and not political independence. Under such circumstances labor will not make the Democratic Party more radical; the Democrats will continue, as they have these past two decades, to make labor more conservative. The prospects are that unity in itself will not steer the ship of labor towards an independent party of its own but towards greater accommodation to machine politicians, Dixiecrats and those liberals like Humphrey-Douglas-Stevenson who are in the process of deliberalization.

Such political action inhibits true labor solidarity, it subverts the interests of the rank and file worker to those of the leader and his machine allies. It pinpoints the basic danger of unity, that it may lead not to united *action,* but to greater centralized power, and thus inaction.

THE DISUNITY OF THESE TWENTY YEARS was not all harmful. It created useful competition between unions. When the CIO communications workers won a 10c raise from the Bell System, it put pressure on the AFL electrical workers to get a dime or more. And vice versa.

Even the claim that disunity meant ceaseless jurisdictional strikes and squabbles was an oversimplification. Of course there were some useless jurisdictional disputes, particularly in the building trades. But too often what passes for a jurisdictional dispute is in reality an attempt by a militant group of unionists to get out of a bureaucratic or weak union. Thus, for instance, a group of tracklayers who tried for twenty-four years to democratize their union were able to achieve the result only when they could run to the other federation of labor—in this case the CIO. And a group of retail clerks in an impotent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and disintegrating union were able to improve their bargaining power by going over to the rival federation. Many a group of workers has been able to escape from a bureaucratic conservative leadership precisely by this route. It hardly seems likely that with CIO-AFL unity such a safety valve will continue to be available—unless more basic changes follow on the heels of formal unity.

The unification of AFL and CIO can be a great thing for the rank and file worker—but only if it is the beginning of true solidarity, if it leads to the end of business unionism, if it results in a wave of new organization, and a rededication to old economic and political principles that have been forgotten. But such a task is herculean. For instance, if the unified federation tries to organize the 8 million unorganized employees in the white collar and retail fields it must first arrive at a *modus vivendi* with Beck, who insists that almost all department store employees up to the sales counter are in his jurisdiction. How will that square with CIO's concept of industrial unionism? And what guarantees are there—if this point is not ironed out—that the very vital help from the teamsters will be forthcoming for such a drive? Each attempt at organization, at new collective bargaining techniques, at new and independent politics, will lead to the same dilemmas and conflicts. Unification creates a better mood for trying to resolve them. In that sense we must all welcome the step taken in Miami.

But if unity is born sterile, if it ends merely in strengthening the hand of top leadership, if it muffles the voice of the rank and file further, then it may lead not only to setbacks for labor but to future splits as well. We shall naturally hope for the best; but it would be folly to regard it as automatic. S. L.

2. Hollywood, Killer of the Dream

Gabriel Gladstone

The American Dream enjoins limitless social mobility. Class barriers don't exist for it, or if they do they are so fluid as to be virtually without meaning. "From each according to his abilities . . . " could really stand as its motto, with the corollary that in America only the shiftless go unrewarded.

Subscribed to by nearly all Americans, the American Dream represents a constant threat to the realities of the American class structure. It must therefore be exorcised, and the job of exorcism is performed by the organs of mass media, particularly the movies. Almost every Hollywood production is an attempt to annihilate mobility as an ideal. In opposition to the dynamism of the American Dream, Hollywood preaches an ideal of passivity. If "God helps those who help themselves" is the slogan of the American Dream, the rival slogan of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hollywood is "All things come to those who wait." While in the American Dream lack of ambition is the only sin, in Hollywood it is the only real virtue, just as mobility, social climbing is the only real crime. The villain of Hollywood is the man who takes the American Dream seriously.

Let us take a recent Hollywood film as an example, a bad film, because it is primarily in bad films that the message is most explicit. The film is "It's a Woman's World." It is about an automobile magnate, Clifton Webb, who is planning to promote an executive from within his organization to the rank of general manager at a salary of $125,000 a year. To find the right man for the job, he invites three regional sales managers and their wives to New York. These are: Fred MacMurray - Lauren Bacall, Cornel Wilde - June Allyson, Van Heflin - Arlene Dahl.

MacMurray introduces one of the main themes of the film. "I used to be at the bottom," he says, "and I was happy then." Now he is miserable, his marriage on the verge of collapse. He alone has risen from the ranks, from factory worker to salesman to manager, and his rise is portrayed as a tragedy: he has picked up an ulcer along the way, not an ordinary ulcer, it is soon clear, but one that will probably kill him unless he stops *wanting* to succeed, *trying* to climb. He has risen too fast, too hungrily, one gathers, with an excessive determination to succeed; of the three men, he wants the job the most and consequently he is out of the running almost from the start. His wife, Lauren Bacall, carries the moral burden of the film. Her virtue consists in scorning his ambition and in emphasizing, rather menacingly, the identity of ambition and death. In her most dramatic scene with MacMurray, when she assures him that even if he is chosen as general manager she will "stick," she adds, "I'll look good in black": punishment for daring to reach the top will be death.

Cornel Wilde, who also wants the job, though not as badly as MacMurray, is threatened with death of a sort, too. He is portrayed as the only integrated character in the film, happily married, an image which is concretized here as in countless other Hollywood films by having his wife fling a pillow at him. Wilde's virtue is honesty; of the three contenders he alone consistently speaks his mind, tells Webb just what he thinks. The death he is threatened with is one of total personal disintegration. If he is to become general manager, he soon realizes, his honesty must come to an end. His wife must learn to stop belching at parties and he must learn to be a hypocrite. And his success will mean not only his personal ruination, but the ruination of his family as well. They will have to leave Kansas City, their home, and move to New York, identified as the city of homelessness. More passive than MacMurray yet eager for the job, Wilde is eliminated from the running, too.

WHAT, THEN, ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS for success in Hollywood? They are formulated by Van Heflin, the victorious contender. "To reach the top," he tells Webb, you must possess "x-plus." What exactly, asks Webb, is "x-plus"? The answer is that it is completely indescribable, incapable of logical analysis or definition. Of one thing he is sure, however: all success-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ful leaders have it. "Eisenhower has it,"* he declares. "Edison had it." The inference is plain: *all* leaders, *all* employers have it; though it cannot be acquired, the ruling class to a man always possesses it. And how, Webb asks him, can you recognize someone who has "x-plus"? "If you have it," replies Heflin, "you'll recognize it." In short, the proof of "x-plus" is ex post facto. Once you are inscrutably elected for leadership, through no efforts on your own behalf, you may be sure that you possess "x-plus" and deserve to rule, just as those above and alongside you possess "x-plus" and deserve to rule too.

Heflin, who ultimately succeeds, is almost disqualified, too, because of his wife, Arlene Dahl, the villain of the film. It is she who personifies the American Dream with its stress on ambition and the boundlessness of opportunity. "I'll reach the top," Heflin tells her, "but I'll reach it on my own." His patience, obviously, is inexhaustable, while she has nothing but contempt for the notion that in the end merit is always discovered. Her husband is modest; that is his virtue in Webb's eyes, his sin in hers. He is the only one of the three men who never expresses any desire to have the job which finally is offered him. It is his wife who does everything to promote him because she knows he has no interest in promoting himself. As a reward for her unregenerate commitment to the American Dream she is depicted as totally evil, and is made to wear a perpetual sneer as the badge of her fatal dissatisfaction.

She is evil in yet another way. She alone of the three wives is invested with sex appeal, for if Hollywood demands passivity on a social level, it also demands impotence on a sexual. The favored of Hollywood are those who want nothing, not even, or especially not, sex. In contrast to the other two women, her dresses are cut startlingly low. She apparently wants sex and wants others to want it, too. MacMurray - Bacall, Wilde - Allyson—all are seen to sleep in separate beds. If they have sex it must be only occasionally and with a certain amount of indifference. Heflin - Dahl, on the other hand, are never shown in separate beds, as a matter of fact their bedroom isn't shown at all. Once they stand hugging on the threshhold of their bedroom—there, unmistakably, one bed awaits them both and they enjoy the love they make.

His wife presents Heflin with the only obstacle to the job that is waiting to find him. Clearly, if he is to be chosen, he must first purge himself of sex and emerge as passive sexually as he is socially. So in a very brief scene he informs his wife that he has been trying to save their marriage for years—it is the first the audience has heard about it—and that he cannot. She must pack up and leave. With the rapidity of castration he sheds his sex and guarantees his elevation to the job that is seeking him. A few minutes later he is informed by Webb that he has been chosen because only he possesses "x-plus." "You had a handicap," remarks Webb, referring to his wife, "but you got rid of it." Earlier, when Heflin's wife tried to wheedle out of him with a kiss a prom-

* Certainly one possible inference from the career of Eisenhower is that the American Dream always was telling the truth: in America *anybody* can become president. The movie tells us this isn't so. In some mystical way, he is *especially* qualified to be president.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ise that he would select her husband, he was able disdainfully to wipe her lipstick off his mouth, demonstrating *his* possession of "x-plus," his imperviousness to desire.

Though Heflin, as evidenced by his final castration, is the prime possessor of "x-plus," even Wilde and MacMurray possess some, because after all they are managers. But what of those who possess no "x-plus" at all?

THOSE WITHOUT "X-PLUS" are delineated in the only farcical scene in the film. Earlier our credulity has been courted by superficial evocations of reality: Webb's office is located in 99 Park Avenue, and in one scene the camera takes us on a rapid car-view tour down Fifth Avenue. Obviously, "It's a Woman's World" is intended to be a representation of life as it really is in New York, stripped of sentimentality and distortion. In one scene, however, the movie abandons all pretense to realism and resorts to farce. The scene takes place in the bargain basement of a large clothing store, presumably Klein's, where Lauren Bacall has taken June Allyson to buy a dress. It is immediately apparent, though, that we are not in Klein's at all but in Dante's Inferno: greed is rampant. The first sight that greets us is one of hideous, semi-nude, fat female flesh, and the first sound the shrill cry of "Moitle," the conventional stigma of perpetual inferiority. On all sides there is strife and theft and vandalism: dresses are torn to shreds or stolen from under averted eyes. We are, of course, in the presence of the masses, as we have been in their presence before in innumerable Hollywood movies—on beaches at Coney Island, in every subway scene we have ever watched.

Bacall and Allyson are compelled briefly to inhabit this Inferno in order thoroughly to expose it. Within this Inferno they occupy an island; without raising their voices or elbowing a soul out of the way, they find the finest dress in the store. When they choose —and they seldom do—those with "x-plus" can beat those without it at their own game, and without ever resorting to methods which are at once cause and effect of the latter's condition. To be successful at acquiring anything, it is best to walk within a circumambient beatitude.

IF HOLLYWOOD DRAMAS INCULCATE the notion that it is fatal to attempt to acquire "x-plus," their musical and light comedies suggest that it is insane even to try.* The heroes of these films are superior to life in every respect. If they want tickets on an air-

* Occasionally, the grasping hero (or heroine) does seem to reach the top, but only after he has renounced his "graspingness". In "How to Marry a Millionaire" for example, Lauren Bacall, who has set out singlemindedly to marry money, does in fact hook a tycoon. Only she doesn't know it till after she's married; she believes she's married a pauper. In other words, she is rewarded only after she has renounced success, that is money, as a goal. And it is the same with "Sabrina," the chauffeur's daughter. She, too, marries a millionaire, but not the one she originally had her eye on, not Holden, portrayed as the quintessence of sex, but Bogart, paternal, affectionate, throughout the film an old hot water bag. And even he, Bogart, ends up chasing her—she early stops pursuing wealth. "I'm not reaching for the moon," she says, "the moon is reaching for me," as it is only fitting it should because, though poor, she is so chock full of "x-plus," she would sparkle in a slum. Our social system, Hollywood is perfectly willing to concede, does occasionally make mistakes, as in the case of Sabrina, who obviously deserves to be on top. The point is these mistakes can be rectified by—patience. Sooner or later the moon reaches for all worthy people.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plane, a secretary picks up a phone and in the next scene they are in the air; and it is the same with tickets to a fight or a play or a night club. The heroes of Hollywood do not grapple with life; in their preternatural passivity they glide through it. Even dressing is no problem to them. Before the glass shower doors so much as open, a butler stands waiting, robe in hand —a stock scene in nearly all musical comedies—to drape Van Johnson; or John Payne, who has demonstrated on dozens of occasions his delicate ability to tuck his shirt into his trousers without unzipping his fly. Wealth the hero usually possesses, though he never lifted a finger to acquire it, and the feeling is always inescapable that it never really was acquired. Its origin is alluded to cryptically, in a word or two—"oil", "steel"—and buried so deeply in the past as to constitute a primordial blessing.

Though he was not always so, the hero, since meeting the heroine, is superior to sex, too. She at first does not know this. She believes him to be "fast," that is, sexual, mobile, only to learn that, so far from being an upstart, he actually comes from "family." Very possibly, at one time he was interested in sex—as he enters a night club with the heroine, a torrid beauty, presumably an old flame, greets him avidly—but his sex is really part of his inviolable worldliness and can be dispensed with in a moment, as he is presently to prove to the heroine. The hero treats his body as Richard Baxter, a seventeenth century divine, exhorted good Christians to treat their wealth, as a light cloak which can be set aside at any moment.

Each event in the evolution of the hero's history is a rebuke to those without "x-plus," the masses who visit public beaches, ride subways or bargain hunt in Klein's. In his ageless past, the hero has been everywhere, done everything. Whatever he touches he excels at: he swims, he rides horses, he speaks all languages. At ease everywhere, his all-encompassing sophistication is of a piece with his wealth: he was born with it, and the point about it is that it is impossible of emulation.*

"Look on these works, ye masses, and despair!" Hollywood is saying. These are the manipulators of the universe, the people who deserve to rule, whose example we must revere but not presume to try to copy. If the message were precisely articulated, it would run something like this: "You try to succeed only at your shame and your peril. Look at yourselves, greedy, full of human appetites, addicted to hunger, ambition and sex, limited in experience. How can you compare to these extra-human wielders of power, replete with apt phrases and countless skills, who desire nothing, ask for nothing and yet have everything, these people in whose company you would only squirm? You are at home in Klein's, on dirty crowded beaches, in subways. Imagine yourselves in the drawing room of a mansion. Why, you don't deserve to be there—take our word for it. And if you won't, we will do our best to break you. We will do our best to kill you and to kill your dream."

---

* In "It's a Woman's World," two women haggling over a dress in the Inferno scene begin by addressing each other very daintily only to descend to degenerate Brooklynese. They were never meant to bury their roots and if they ever attempt to do so they will assuredly collapse disgracefully under pressure.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MR. TRILLING, THEODORE DREISER

(and Life in the U.S.)

Bernard Rosenberg

The literary reputation of Theodore Dreiser has suffered a slow but steady decline in recent years, curiously paralleling the decline of radical sentiment among American intellectuals. One of the critics who has been most effective in depreciating Dreiser has been Lionel Trilling, author of *The Liberal Imagination*. A critic with a highly organized if not always explicit ideological bent, Trilling has apparently felt Dreiser to be a threat to his liberal equanimity and has several times returned to attacks upon him. These attacks, which are of more than literary interest, seem to me symptoms of what troubles the liberal intellectual in the America of the 1950's. I propose to discuss Trilling's comments on Dreiser not primarily in literary terms but rather in the social terms that are his fundamental, if unacknowledged, interest.

"Whatever the virtues of Dreiser may be," writes Trilling, "he could not report the social fact with the kind of accuracy it needs." This judgment, I shall try to show, is perverse, but it is also opaque: for what kind of accuracy *does* the social fact need? Mr. Trilling does not say. More important, however, is the fact that in making this judgment he has forsaken the canons of art for those of sociology. And on *that* ground Dreiser stands very firmly. A literary critic would have every right to complain about Dreiser's structural clumsiness, his little-noted sentimentality, his preposterous "chemisms," his tendency to stress chance factors while committed to a philosophy of remorseless determinism. Such objections are significant in a judgment of Dreiser's work. Yet, there still remains a magnificent fulfillment of precisely what Trilling says is necessary for *the* novel in its classic intention.

These requirements Trilling states as follows:

> Cervantes sets for the novel the problem of appearance and reality; and the shifting and conflict of social classes becomes the field of the problem of knowledge, of how we know and of how reliable our knowledge is, which at that very moment of history is vexing the philosophers and scientists. And the poverty of the Don suggests that the novel is born with the appearance of money as a social element—money the great solvent of the social fabric of the old society, the great generator of illusion

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> . . . Money is the medium that for good or bad, makes for a fluent society. It does not make for an equal society but for one in which there is a constant shifting of classes, a frequent change in the personnel of the dominant class . . . Money, snobbery, the ideal of status, these become in themselves the objects of phantasy, the support of phantasies of love, freedom, charm, power, as in *Madame Bovary*, whose heroine is the sister, at a three centuries' remove, of Don Quixote.

If these are the elements of fiction, then they are nowhere more clearly present than in *Sister Carrie* and *Jennie Gerhardt*—sisters, some decades removed, of Emma Bovary. Their stories form nothing less than an anatomization of American society.

Emile Durkheim had suggested in Dreiser's day that when men speak of a force external to themselves which they are powerless to control, their subject is not God but social organization. This is also Dreiser's theme, and to it he brings a sense of religious awe and wonder. "So well defined is the sphere of social activity that he who departs from it is doomed." The gods are dethroned, but powers outside man still determine his fate. Durkheim identified social facts, i.e., the existence of norms, precisely as Dreiser did: by asking what would happen if they were violated. It is their common opinion that when a serious breach of the rules occurs, it will be followed by pre-defined punishment. The normative determination of human conduct makes it obligatory to act in one way and to abstain from its opposite. All this is quite marvelous. Norms develop outside the individual consciousness and exist prior to it; we internalize them, and are fully aware of their grip upon us only when our behavior is deviant. Durkheim illustrated this proposition—without which sociology has no reason for being—in a dozen different ways, and so did Dreiser.

Lester Kane fails to marry Jennie Gerhardt not merely because the relationship is taboo, but also because the genteel inheritor of wealth is unfitted, by a lifetime of conditioning, for any environment other than the one in which he was raised. Similarly, Hurstwood, when separated from his old cronies, disintegrates as if by a law of social physics. Those who live in what Dreiser called "Convention's Own Tinder-Box" but flout no conventions, like the elder Gerhardt and Hurstwood's respectable family, never feel the whip hand that keeps them in line, since they are so entirely submissive to it. But those who defy custom suffer ostracism, and having paid their penalty, see as no one else does the distance between appearance and reality.

OURS IS A PECUNIARY CIVILIZATION. Who among the novelists, besides Balzac, understood this better than Dreiser? His wife has declared that he suffered from a "poverty complex" to the very end and we know this just as surely from the texts as from her testimony. ("Isn't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it fine to be rich?" asks Jennie.) The key to an understanding of money, said Georg Simmel in his cool disquisition on the subject, is its impersonality. No matter how secured, money can be used to buy much the same goods and services. This *aperçu* of social science is at the heart of Dreiser's fiction.

A famous chapter of *Sister Carrie* begins with the author's speculations about the true meaning of money which, he remarks, has yet to be popularly understood. Carrie's view, if she had been able to articulate it, would simply have been that money is something everybody else has and she must get.

> One of her order of mind would have been content to be cast away upon a desert island with a bundle of money, and only the long strain of starvation would have taught her that in some cases it could have no value. Even then she would have had no conception of the relative value of the thing; her one thought would, undoubtedly, have concerned the pity of having so much power and the inability to use it.

A kind of pecuniary passion moves Jennie and Carrie as they indulge the sexual passion of their lovers. For Balzac, these two passions, of approximately equal puissance, are the mainsprings of human action. But Dreiser charts a transvaluation of values such that sex becomes a means and money an end whose adequacy is never really doubted.

Money, then, occupies the center of Dreiser's stage, but it is meaningless apart from the quest for status, or secular salvation, which, in turn, implies a class system. Social stratification is a fact modern Americans have always been loathe to accept.* Early American sociologists paid so little heed to class or viewed it so superficially that their thoughts on the subject do not materially differ from those of the layman. Sumner, Small, Giddings and Cooley were often interested in class, but they tended to find all virtue where it is still said to reside—in the middle class. How status really affects us goes largely unanalyzed in their writings. These men were Dreiser's contemporaries at the turn of the century, and his achievement seems all the greater when measured against their insignificance.

As early as 1900 Dreiser knew a great deal about the density of class relations in the United States; they thicken the texture of his narratives. Dreiser could picture the class struggle in all its magnitude, as toward the end of *Sister Carrie*. And he was equally acute at noticing all the marks of invidious distinction between one class and another, as well as the finer gradations within each of them. *Elmtown's Youth,* a study completed not long ago, focuses upon class differences

*Robert MacIver recently pointed out that, except for the United States and the Soviet Union, no civilization has ever laid claim to being classless. The ideological commitment is virtually as strong here as in Russia, and almost as far removed from the truth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as they are exhibited in an American high school, but no more incisively than Dreiser did in delineating Jessica Hurstwood who at 17 attends a school in which most of the pupils enjoy a social position slightly higher than hers. As a result:

> She liked nice clothes and urged for them constantly. Thoughts of love and elegant individual establishments were running in her head. She met girls at the high school whose parents were truly rich and whose fathers had standing locally as partners or owners of solid businesses. These girls gave themselves the airs befitting the thriving domestic establishments from whence they issued. They were the only ones of the school about whom Jessica concerned herself.

ENDOGAMY IS AMONG THE MOST PROMINENT signs of class. With few exceptions, it may be safely predicted that a worker will marry the daughter of a worker, a businessman the daughter of a business man. This is the universal rule—contradicted chiefly in our dream life, in popular literature and in the cinema. It is unthinkable that Jessica and her brother will marry beneath their station; indeed, Mrs. Hurstwood pins all her hopes on having them move into a higher sphere. The restaurateur's wife is a pusher; she suffers from "status panic," longing for advancement at least through her children. Dreiser's sure touch is evident here for he locates a maximal anxiety precisely in the class that is just below the top.

If in-marriage gives us a fairly reliable index to class, attire provides another. Dreiser was so fascinated with clothes that he probably devoted more space to them than to nature. He will lovingly describe a dress while failing to portray the features of the woman who wears it. This is a calculated emphasis which serves the purpose of differentiating one ideal type from another. Hurstwood before his fall:

> For the most part . . . lounged about, dressed in excellent suits of imported goods, a solitaire ring, a fine blue diamond in his tie, a striking vest of some new pattern, and a watch-chain of solid gold, which held a charm of rich design, and a watch of the latest make and engraving.

Drouet, the drummer, is vividly characterized by his clothes:

> His suit was a striped and crossed pattern of brown wool, new at that time, but since become familiar as a business suit. From his coat sleeves protruded a pair of linen cuffs of the same pattern, fastened with large, gold-plate buttons, set with the common yellow agates known as "cat's eyes." His fingers bore several rings—one, the ever-enduring heavy seal—and from his vest dangled a neat gold chain, from which was suspended the secret insignia of the Order of the Elks. The whole suit was rather tight-fitting and was finished off with heavy-soled tan shoes, highly polished, and the grey fedora hat.

Every stage in Hurstwood's decline, and in Carrie's rise, is marked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by sartorial manifestations. Drouet remains relatively unchanged: we know this because his clothes are the same. There are always badges of belonging, literally from rags to riches.

The insignia that dangles from Drouet's chain is extremely important for it signifies membership in what used to be called a voluntary association. Dreiser saw that it was no more voluntary than most other forms of association. America—as distinct from certain segments of its population—is not a *nation* of joiners. Neither camaraderie nor like-mindedness by itself motivates people to join churches, clubs, professional groups, or for that matter, trade associations and labor unions. Most workers in a metropolitan area like New York, as the sociologist Mirra Komarovsky has demonstrated, belong only to unions, less often to churches and scarcely to anything else. What historians like Beard have commonly regarded as a national mania turns out to be mainly a middle-class necessity. One must be a Kiwanian or run the risk of failure. Lions and Elks, Kiwanians, and Masons, not to say Oddfellows, all those peculiar totems of business civilization, are seen as vessels of social advancement. Beard, the sophisticated materialist who homogenizes the population when it should be separated into different strata, misses this point. But it does not escape Dreiser. "I tell you," another drummer advises Drouet, "it's a great thing. Look at Hazenstab. He isn't so deuced clever. Of course, he's got a good house behind him, but that won't do alone. I tell you it's his degree. He's a way-up Mason, and that goes a long way . . . "

This is one way to assuage an enormous craving that has been artificially aroused in nearly all Americans. Only the proletarian Puritans, Carrie's sister and brother-in-law and Jennie's father, with their Old World background, are fully exempt from it. Dreiser relocates the Protestant Ethic and the Gospel of Work. He finds them in the most submerged classes where thrift is practiced because nothing else can be. The élite and those who have achieved enough status to emulate it act like the *arrivistes* they are. Theirs is a boundless appetite for that triple goal—wealth, place, and fame—which the Hurstwoods never really relinquish. Scarcely anyone outside the lower depths who wishes to keep from slipping and must therefore keep climbing, relinquishes them. These are the tremendous atmospheric pressures Dreiser was able to recreate. It is in his natural medium, *as an artist,* that Dreiser compresses, symbolically, what weightier theoreticians and empiricists took whole books to say. His version of the American experience—which cuts to its heart and moves us to pity and indignation —is not essentially different from Veblen's or Robert Lynd's. One often hears that there is much art in science; there is also much science and not a little pseudo-science in the art of Dreiser. How much is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intuitive does not matter. The product, those massive and lapidary versions of American experience, does matter.

THE WORD DREISER FAVORED above any other was "drift." A total tabulation of its uses would be staggering—which is precisely the effect he intended. For all their show of purposeful activity, Chicago and New York drift, and so does the United States as a whole. So do Carrie and Jennie and everyone else. Are they just so much animated driftwood, now and then miraculously but temporarily resisting the torrents that crush them? Yes, to some extent; to the same extent, *mutatis mutandis,* that Oedipus cannot but drift, into slaying his father and marrying his mother. We drift, but there are powerful undertows and cross-currents which determine our course. This does not mean that man is to be treated as inanimate matter. Not even the bits of nineteenth century positivism that Dreiser soaked up impose such a vision upon him. On the contrary, at its rare best, his early work achieves a kind of Sophoclean grandeur. At the very least, and consistently, he is concerned with organic flux. In one short story, "McEwen and the Slave Makers," he does attempt an entomological analogy of sorts, anthropomorphizing ants who, like men, occupy:

> worlds within worlds, all apparently full of necessity, contention, binding emotions and unities—all, all with sorrow, their sorrow—a vague, sad something out of far-off things which had been there, and was here in this strong bright city day, had been there and would be here until this odd strange thing called *life* had ended.

Not that Dreiser is an animal psychologist who confuses the behavior of ants, bees, and termites with human conduct. Once, Barnaby, a comic-strip character, was walking through the forest with his father and his dog in search of a witch. The father said skeptically, "There's no more chance of our finding a witch than—of that dog talking." Said the dog, "Why does he always use me for an analogy?" No doubt all the wasps, chickens, pigeons, rats, and chimps who have been studied with so much care in a futile attempt to teach us about ourselves, would ask this question if only they had the articulatory appartus and cranial capacity to do so. Lacking the ability to manipulate symbols, infrahuman animals cannot create cultures which for man is the totality of everything he makes, his tools and his rules. This specifically human situation applied to America is the only context in which Dreiser's naturalism unfolds. It differs from the naturalism of Zola who endowed many of his key characters with hereditary stigmata, and from that of Jack London who depicted a primal battle between man and brutish, inscrutable nature. Dreiser's naturalism is of a special kind, anchored in the social and cultural realities of American life.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Part of Dreiser's genius lay in his recognition of both man's affinity with other animals and man's tremendous distance from them. H. L. Mencken understood this. In 1925 he explained that *Sister Carrie* and *Jennie Gerhardt* were variations on the same somber theme.

> Reduce the story to a hundred words, and the same words would also describe *Sister Carrie.* Jennie, like Carrie, is a rose grown from turnip-seed . . . But the history of each is the history of the other. *Jennie, like Carrie, escapes from the physical miseries of the struggle for existence only to taste the worse miseries of the struggle for happiness* . . . The tragedy of Carrie and Jennie, in brief, is not that they are degraded, but that they are lifted up, not that they go to the gutter, but that they escape the gutter and glimpse the stars. (My emphasis.—B.R.)

Mencken's synopsis is perfectly accurate. Dreiser begins where the jungle ends, where sentience and not subsistence is the problem, where an ancient obstacle has been overcome and a greater one emerges. In 1916 the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice objected to *The Genius*—and it could have similarly objected to Dreiser's first two novels—chiefly because that book contained "very vivid descriptions of the activities of certain female delinquents who do not, apparently, suffer any consequence from their misconduct but, in the language of the day, 'get away with it.' " Actually they get away with nothing. They get away from poverty and the condition of emotional anaesthesia that attends it. No longer required to scramble for a living, their minds are exposed to all the subtle tortures of life above the animal level. These dumb quiescent creatures, by virtue of an archetypal ascent from the biological to the human sphere, are prepared, at the climax of each novel, for the real tragedy they must now confront. Hurstwood's disorientation—he loses his moorings in the middle class while clinging desperately to its ethics—is scarcely more poignant than Carrie's rise. From Hurstwood, the symbol of downward mobility, a price heavy enough to destroy him is exacted. Even today, with all our talk of the open class system, how little analysis there is of a case like this, and how common it nonetheless remains! But, if the consequences of descent on the social scale go largely unstudied, those of upward mobility are mostly misunderstood. Both carry their measure of pain with them.

I wish to suggest that Dreiser's early work is especially pertinent at the present moment. Is it not because we are now undergoing as a culture what Carrie and Jennie lived through individually? Ever since the United States reached national self-consciousness, its people have boasted that their land provided the opportunity for eradicating poverty. Whoever had the gumption and the initiative could pull himself up by his bootstraps. Much of this is still more myth than reality. All the same, America has achieved a degree of material satisfaction undreamed-of fifty years ago. Nearly all of us have our bellies full and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in another decade starvation in this land may be totally eliminated. As we enjoy our creature comforts, eat more, work less, and move relentlessly forward, what will become of us? This is the question our arch-materialist implicitly raised in telling the story of Carrie and Jennie who achieved economic security and then began to suffer.

When Henry Steele Commager writes of a later Dreiser novel that "it was not an American Tragedy that Dreiser told but the tragedy of life itself," he is throwing up a mist, somewhat like that which Trilling has recently thrown up with regard to Flaubert. For Trilling, Flaubert's fools, Bouvard and Pecuchet, suffer one misfortune after another not because bourgeois society is what it is, but because "life is what it is." This peculiar obfuscation of the *social* novel (and Trilling admits of no other kind) which removes the sting and the pain from it, is deeply related to his incapacity to see the strength and the truth in Dreiser's novels. For Dreiser tells us, with a power that hardly another 20th Century American novelist has matched, what it means to live in the country of the dollar. And the truth of what he tells us cannot but be profoundly disquieting to the complacent liberals of our day.

Among Our New Contributors . . . Michael Harrington, a young writer who has written for *The Commonweal, Partisan Review* and other magazines . . . Bob Bone will soon publish a study of the Negro novel . . . Murray Kempton, well-known columnist for the *New York Post* . . . Gabriel Gladstone has written for *The Congress Weekly* and other publication.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sects: in Sociology and Politics

Emanuel Geltman and Stanley Plastrik

In a footnote to his essay "Sects and Sectarians" (DISSENT, Autumn, 1954), Lewis Coser advises that he is employing a "typological procedure," and that the political sect modeled in his study is a sociological construct, neither portraying in its entirety any particular sect, nor implying in its composition any value judgment. As colleagues of Coser, sharing his deep concern with the problems of socialism, we understand that it could not have been his intent to disclaim "resemblance to persons living or dead." Yet his essay illustrates in its approach and methods the limitations of sociological techniques when applied to what are fundamentally *political* problems.

An examination of socialist sectarianism does indeed seem to us to be an essential undertaking. It is incontrovertible that what passes for a "socialist movement" in this country today consists almost entirely of sects, distinguished by greater, and rarely lesser, degrees of intellectual sterility and political impotnce. But a "sociology of the sect" which does not mesh its analysis with the truly significant problem of the absence of a socialist movement limits the usefulness of its perceptions. If the sect is a caricature of a vital socialist movement, not only are its roots (withered!) still in the political soil that nourished the healthy plant, but its very malformation as a sect lies in some political development. It is *this* recognition that we find missing in Coser's article.

I

By way of accenting the typological approach, Coser understates the role of ideology in the political sect. The sect consists of men cut off from society; it adheres to a "special set of rules of conduct"; and its " . . . very structure, quite apart from its ideology, is likely to lead to a number of characteristic patterns of behavior."

Exclusiveness, intolerance, persecution of heretics, tendency towards de-individualization (these are cited by Coser) are undoubtedly frequently the product of the sect's narrowness. We are familiar with this, and from our own experience could easily enlarge on it. But how much importance should we attach to this? Is it decisive in understanding the role of the sect in political life?

Many, perhaps all, of the characteristics alleged to be peculiar to the Marxist political sect, can be found in other movements, organizations or social groups. Was the Nazi Party, let us say, noted for its toleration of heretics? The Salvation Army for its exaltation of the individual? Are our mass, loose

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

political parties in the United States especially noted for their lack of bureaucratization? And shall we admire the intolerant, bureaucratic and conformist manner in which the leadership of the British Labor Party—a classic example of a non-sectarian socialist movement for whose achievements we have the profoundest respect—is presently handling its Bevanite heresy? We think the point obvious enough without belaboring it. (Except to ask: isn't it possible that the sect often reflects, duplicates on its own level, the mores and "patterns" of the non-sect power groups?)

It might be that the particular characteristics enumerated, in the particular way they are used, cannot be found intact (neither add one nor take one) in other social or political bodies. We doubt it, but even so: isn't that so arbitrary and subjective an approach as to preclude fruitful investigation? Being, alas, more familiar with the realities of sect life than Coser we could supply additional evidences of sectarianism. But then where do we stop? Shall we each of us create our own standard of weights and measures? And include or exclude any given body as it pleases us by expanding and contracting our criteria?

The consequences of this method are, for example, indicated indirectly in that the Socialist Party is not included among the sects Coser discusses. Presumably this is so because the SP does not in *all* respects meet the qualifications set forth. (Whether this is actually so, whether the SP is happy about heretics, for example, is beside the point. We will assume it is so.) Yet in any valid political sense (that is, in the sense of its relationship with the mass of people and the political life of the country) the SP is as much a sect—let us add, unfortunately—as any of the groups that are referred to by Coser. We say this not to insist that the SP be damned along with all the others but rather to point to the real perplexities and problems of socialism today. This seems to us a sad fact of infinitely greater relevance than whether or not the SP is less "exclusive" than the Socialist Labor Party or the Socialist Workers Party. The American people have excluded themselves quite as much from the SP as from the others.

II

Suppose we look briefly at the "special set of rules of conduct," accepted by those qualified as "professional revolutionaries." The classic example of this, of course, was the Bolshevik Party organized by Lenin.

It would be difficult to imagine any social body—let alone a political sect—that did not have "rules of conduct," implicitly or explicitly. The Catholic Church, which Coser contrasts with heretical religious sects, has highly elaborate "rules of conduct," certain of which have precisely the object of welcoming saints and sinners alike into its bosom. What then seems necessary to examine and evaluate are *which* rules of conduct exist.

Coser thus gives attention to the fact that members of the political sect often change their names: symbols of their rebirth. We can see little relevance in this, particularly in light of the fact that *all* the sect personalities named by Coser use their non-symbolic, *real* names! More often than not practical

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reasons of self or family protection are all that is involved in changing names. So far as we know sects in this country have rarely insisted that members change their names, and have at least sometimes encouraged the opposite. To which we will add that many a non-sectarian, or presumably so, revolutionist (e.g. Martov, the Russian Menshevik theoretician) felt obliged to adopt a party name. The point seems trivial in itself.

A more significant relation is made on the exclusiveness of the sect. Here at any rate there is an identifiable relevance. At issue presumably is the matter of the Bolsheviks and their struggle with the Mensheviks, the exclusiveness of the former epitomizing the differences between the two. Admittedly, this was a difference, an important one; but we really gain little understanding of the Bolsheviks or the Mensheviks by giving this difference a disproportionate value. The real differences were political in nature, and so proved themselves to be in the evolution of both factions. Even in its own terms, "exclusiveness versus broadness" concealed political issues: how each group saw the unfolding of the Russian Revolution. Agree with it or not, we recommend as reading on this point Trotsky's brilliant essay on the different concepts of the Russian Revolution, appended to his biography of Stalin.

The sect is intolerant. By and large, there is no denying that. Yet, it has happened that—from their own point of view and for their own purposes —sects have been tolerant in degree and quality beyond any comparison with non-sectarian groups. We doubt if the most thorough investigation would disclose many organizations, past or present, which were more tolerant of dissident views than the Workers Party (predecessor of the Independent Socialist League—the "Shachtman group,") at certain stages of its development. Which did not make it any less a sect, as its leaders we are sure would have been the first to acknowledge.

Tolerance is an essential ingredient of a healthy socialist movement, yet its absence or presence (regrettably perhaps) hardly distinguishes sects from non-sects. If large mass organizations have sometimes been more tolerant of dissidents than the sect, it has often been not so much a matter of principle as of expediency (the dissidents being part of the over-all "power" picture, or disposing of enough power themselves to protect their positions). By which we mean to say that if intolerance is characteristic of the sect (and it generally is) it is a characteristic conditioned by political attitudes and aspirations.

III

Is it true that political sects have not made any contributions to the socialist movement or its body of thought? Although not stated explicitly by Coser, the essay points to that conclusion.

To begin with, very few people have made original contributions to socialist (or any other) thought, let alone sects or parties. (We will not pretend that we have researched the issue intensively. However, it occurs to us that the sect *qua* organization may often have been in a better position to develop an idea or political position precisely because its attention is focused

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inward. Where else is the egoism of an interminable discussion likely to be practical?)

Who are the originators of socialist thought and action, in what way, and why, can be debated, but never settled. Debs, as thoroughly non-sectarian and popular a leader as American socialism has produced, was not—in terms of importance or influence or contribution to the evolution of his movement—on a par with Morris Hillquit. Hillquit, the theoretical leader of the popular Debsian party, formulator of its tactics and its strategy, was nevertheless as thoroughgoing a sectarian in his behavior as any of those mentioned by Coser.

For that matter, was not Marx himself the leader of a sect? Each of the qualities noted by Coser could, we believe, be documented from an examination of the early Communist League and other groups with whom Marx worked, including the First International. Marx's and Engels's vast contribution to thought do not make their associations less sectarian. Conversely, sectarianism would hardly appear to be of overriding importance in evaluating historically Marx's group associations. We could carry the point further—did Trotsky (sectarian) contribute less to socialist thought than Ramsay MacDonald (non-sectarian)?—but . . .

IV

If we have insisted upon the need for a political analysis of the problem raised by Coser, it is not because we disagree with his more general observations but rather because we think *such* an analysis will help us understand the problems that confront socialism today. It is not, nor can it be, our intention to supply such an analysis in this rejoinder. DISSENT will, we hope, receive such contributions in time.

In brief, we believe that a political examination of socialist sects would disclose that their role today is negative, precisely to the extent that they have proved incapable of relating ideologically to the political realities of the day. Incapable of coping intellectually or practically with the great questions of our time, they bend them into stereotypes. With socialism battered into isolation by a thousand circumstances *outside their control,* as well too by their inability to meet these circumstances creatively, the sects intensify their isolation, their "sectness," by making a fetish of their separate "programs" (all too often reduced to empty formulae, and used in and out of place) and organizations. No matter what their aspirations—and except for a few sects who are happy in their isolation the way prisoners are sometimes happy in jail, most do at least pretend that time and progress will free them—they are unattractive and sterile groups, precluded almost by their very nature from being more than they are.

The failure of socialism in the United States, the lack of influence of the socialist movement, its inability to communicate with the masses of people and to establish any vital contact with reality—these are the big questions. They are questions that a "typological" study cannot even depict in full, and certainly not clarify.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lewis Coser replies:

Geltman's and Plastrik's critique of my essay seems to me to be based on a misunderstanding of what a typological procedure aims to accomplish. Social scientists can use concepts which are closely geared to the empirical and historical reality at hand or they may endeavor to use "pure," abstract concepts which are farther removed from concrete historical reality but offer great advantage if one is concerned with comparative analysis.

Constructed types set up logically consistent conceptions; they can never serve fully to explain any specific empirical case, but they may serve as a kind of measuring rod by which we can measure concrete variations from the abstract norm. Since every historical phenomenon is individually unique, a scientific conceptualization can never fully exhaust empirical reality, but without such conceptions we would be unable to move beyond the level of sheer description. All this would appear more plausible to my critics had I utilized types with which they are more familiar. Had I talked about romanesque or gothic architecture or about capitalism and feudalism they would, I am sure, not have misunderstood me to mean that certain elements of romanesque could not be found in many a gothic structure or that certain elements of feudalism were not present in most capitalist societies. They would have found it easier to agree that these types are indeed abstractions from concrete reality, and that the different elements which form the type may all be found independently.

When I suggest that sects have certain common structural properties, my critics answer by pointing to the undeniable fact that empirically most sects do not exhibit all the characteristics I describe and that, on the other hand, some of these characteristics can be found in other types of organizations also. To be sure; but what of it? Striving for profit may be one of the elements that enters into the constructed type "modern capitalism"—but if someone should point out that the Phoenicians seem already to have been eager to make a fast buck he wouldn't really have advanced the argument very far.

All this is of course not meant to imply that study of any concrete sect can dispense with analysis of its particular and unique qualities, or that ideological and political elements should not concern such an analysis; I was, however, clearly not concerned with this or that particular sect but with their common structural features. I tried to show that despite a great variety of ideological and political content certain similarities emerge in all sect organizations.

Surely my critics don't believe that I am naive enough to think that only sects are intolerant or level individuality. What I claimed was rather that in the structure of the sect there emerges a unique type of combination of a certain number of characteristics and that this combination distinguishes the sect type from the church type. If, as my critics seem to believe, all the key characteristics of the radical socialist sects of our time stem only from concrete political and historical circumstances, I wonder how they would explain the obvious similarities between political, religious and, I may add, psychoanalytical sects.

I am aware that in the socialist movement the term sect has been used not as an analytical tool but as a term of abuse, but there is surely no need to maintain the socialist tradition in *this* respect. Of course, in the sense I used the term the Socialist Party is not a sect—which makes it not a bit more "desirable" an organization. Both the Socialist Party and the political sects are indeed without contact with the masses of the American people. But while

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the radical sects have made exclusiveness a principle of organization, the SP is actually so inclusive that membership in it is compatible with the most diverse political, religious, social and organizational views. Nowadays one may be a member of the SP and at the same time belong to a non-socialist party. True enough, both the radical sects and the SP are isolated from the main stream of political events but the difference between them is roughly that between a girl who has taken a vow of chastity and one who just happens to be unattractive.

When my critics attribute to me a desire to deny that sectarians have made significant contributions to thought and that non-sectarians are often mediocre bores, they seem to have carried the polemical spirit a bit too far. Quality of thought can obviously not be measured by organizational affiliations —except in the minds of sectarians. That Trotsky was a more significant thinker than Ramsay MacDonald, that George Fox ranks higher in intellectual eminence than Monsignor Sheen, few would dispute; but this in itself is hardly a criterion for assessing the social and political or religious significance of their respective organizations. In any case, I wasn't handing out grades, I was attempting to analyze.

In Coming Issues of Dissent

Collectivism Reconsidered	**G. L. Arnold**
The Economics of Lord Keynes	**Ben B. Seligman**
The New Conservatism: A Reckoning	**E. V. Walter**
The Legend of Edmund Burke	**Bertram Sarason**
The Rewriting of U.S. History	**George Rawick**
Work and the Workers	**Gelo & Andre**
Proudhon: A Reevaluation	**George Woodcock**
Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin	**Benno Sarel**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

The Problem of Social Planning

POLITICS, ECONOMICS AND WELFARE: PLANNING AND POLITICO-ECONOMIC SYSTEMS RESOLVED INTO BASIC SOCIAL PROCESSES, by Robert A. Dahl and Charles E. Lindblom. Harper & Brothers, New York. 1953. 557 pp.

The past ten years have not been easy for democratic socialist theoreticians. Their economic models, so long shielded from the rough winds of reality, were put to a decisive test during the tenure of the British Labour Government and found to be about as realistic as the systems of their academic colleagues working in the neo-classic tradition. It may not have been a fair test of socialist doctrine (some of the circumstances were distinctly inauspicious), but unfortunately it's the results that count, and the results were sufficiently disappointing to put socialists on the defensive for a long time to come. In particular, the failure of nationalization of industry to work its expected miracles has left a void which is as much emotional as intellectual.

It will be cold comfort to these bereft souls (and I include myself) to know that two Yale professors, Messrs. Dahl and Lindblom, have salvaged what they thought salvageable from the "ruins" of left-wing economic thought and, having done likewise with neo-classic theory, have put together an academic patchwork which, though neither particularly neat nor inspiring, carries with itself the solid virtue of down-to-earth pragmatism and an almost obsessive sense of its own limitations.

The book advances the theory that any fairly complex society—capitalist, socialist, totalitarian or what have you—must be ordered by a variety of political and economic processes. Some of these processes, like the price system, have been associated exclusively with the idea of capitalism, others, like government ownership of industry, with socialism; actually all of them, as we are shown with overwhelming documentation, are indispensable for the functioning of a viable economy. A capitalist society finds itself dependent on government owned enterprises and agencies (at the very least: the army), a socialist society will find it advantageous to make use of the price system in certain sectors of the economy.

There are four of these basic processes: the price system, hierarchy (meaning leadership from above, whether found in government, business, unions or even in a household), polyarchy (meaning control of leaders by non-leaders, for example voting and consumers' sovereignty) and bargaining among leaders (of unions, government agencies, etc.). All of these processes are both political and economic in nature, and the authors' insistence that they deal with the political economy as an organic entity stresses not only the political aspects of economics and the economic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

basis of politics, but above all the fact that political and economic measures and processes can be considered as alternatives in specific situations. This in turn implies that political and economic processes are simply means which can be evaluated with detachment and used in the light of their virtues and limitations.

Lindblom and Dahl are extremely vigorous in the application of their thesis and the reader, who at first might find it strange to follow a discussion as to whether in a specific situation the economics of the price system or the politics of voting is the more rational process, will find that these are indeed "live choices."

THE BULK OF THE BOOK is devoted to the detailed description of these various processes; the way they interact and substitute for each other. Most of the material is well known; whatever novelties there are, are minor and of interest only to the professional economist. All we can do here is to pay tribute to the assiduity and the thoroughness with which anything even remotely pertinent has been taken under scrutiny. Starting obviously from neo-classic economics, the authors have included Keynesian and post-Keynesian thought as well as the socialist teachings of the Lange-Lerner school. The final result is a broad, though eclectic, survey of the means available for the rational organization of modern society.

Having dealt with the means of social action with such pragmatic assurance, the two professors are less certain when they approach the ends toward which these means are directed. They postulate seven basic ends: freedom, rationality, democracy, subjective equality, security, progress and appropriate inclusion. The last is not really an end in itself but a qualification, stating that only those societies that choose the other six goals can be included in our community of interests.

A moment's reflection will yield a few questions which are more easily raised than answered:

1. *These seven goals of social action are arbitrary in number, relative in derivation and contingent in application.*

Lindblom and Dahl are the first to realize this objection. Their answer is that these values have been commonly accepted in the Western world and more particularly in the United States. These values may be relative and contingent, but they are the best—and the only ones—which a humanist tradition has bequeathed to us.

2. *The basic goals of social activity, as posited, are moral, not economic.*

It cannot be sufficiently stressed just how radical a departure this is from the usual practice of economists, who have, with a few exceptions, posited economic and quasi-psychological goals as ends for economic activity. Even the welfare economists, more humanely oriented than most, have put forward as the ultimate criterion of economic policy the maximization of welfare, a concept which, though somewhat fuzzy, is ultimately measurable in economic quantities.

The authors, by emphasizing the moral nature of social goals, have rendered us a great service. Social scientists forget all too easily that behind the cobwebs of their graphs and charts, behind marginal utility and indifference curves there hide real human beings. Political and economic thought, however abstract it may become, must in the end return to man. This has been achieved in the present book.

And yet the virtue of this method carries with it a fatal organic weakness. It puts means and ends into the two different universes of economics and morals and thus attenuates the vital relationship between means and ends almost to the point of breaking the causal connection between them. To state it this baldly is, of course, to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reduce it *ad absurdum*: a means without an end is a self-contradiction, but it illustrates what I consider a fatal flaw in the method. It considers the sum total of social institutions as just an arsenal of tools, aseptic and neutral, which can be used by society *ad libitum*. These tools are intrinsically neither bad nor good; even noxious ones can, like poisons in a doctor's prescription, be used to advantage.

I believe that this is an excessively static view which underestimates the necessary and vital interconnection between means and ends. Social processes are not mere tools, but have an inner dynamic, a dialectic if you will, which does not permit their being turned this way or that at the discretion of those who want to use them. They cannot be reversed, as this theory must necessarily assume, nor can they be combined with each other at will. Men who have tried, have found themselves in the role of the sorcerer's apprentice.

THE ATTEMPT TO ATTAIN THE MORAL GOALS of democracy, freedom, etc. without mediation from the operation of the economic apparatus has also consequences of a more practical nature.

The *first* derives from the fact that the proposed values are not Platonic ideas residing in a realm of their own, but function as concrete criteria of action in specific situations. The bundle of values proposed in this book seems particularly unwieldy for this purpose, since the values are vague and often mutually contradictory. Just imagine the difficulty of measuring the merits of a concrete situation, say a tax bill, by applying to it the seven criteria of freedom, rationality, democracy, subjective equality, security, progress and appropriate inclusion. One need only compare the unwieldiness of this method with the simplicity of the economic criteria guiding economic activities in Abba P. Lerner's "Controlled Economy" to come to the conclusion that economic activities might best be guided by purely economic criteria, and that moral values cannot be applied with the immediacy which would seem desirable to all of us.

The *second* practical consequence of splitting the means-end continuum flows from the above mentioned technique of treating social processes as means which can be absolutely controlled. This line of thinking leads in easy stages to the defense of the status quo as the only possible base for rational social action. The argument runs somewhat as follows: Economic theory has shown that social changes can be analyzed and predicted only when they are very small, at the margin, as economic jargon has it. Consequently, if we want to be able to control social changes and plan for them, we must keep them small. That is precisely what is advocated in this book under the term "incrementalism."

I believe this theory is invalid because it assumes a congruence between theory and application which, in fact, does not exist. Economic analysis deals with discontinuous entities, which ideally are infinitely divisible. On this assumption, the shifting of infinitesimal quantities at the margin can produce optimum arrangements. But this very refined method cannot be carried over into reality, because the basic entities of social processes are human beings and human beings do not behave like discontinuous units (except of course as the rational egotists of classic economics or the atomized individuals of the totalitarian state). They are social animals, bound to society at large with a thousand different ties, imitating, competing, acting constantly in the context of the society as a whole. Any policy which would stay obediently within the narrow ambience projected by the theory of incrementalism would as-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sume an amount of control that could not be mustered by any government. This brings up the entire problem of planning to which I shall recur at a later stage.

At this point it might be profitable to inquire into the actual structure of the status quo, which is the Alpha and Omega of our authors' intellectual compass. How much freedom, democracy, etc., do we actually have? Are we moving closer to these ideals or away from them? And, perhaps most important, who will be in charge of planning and executing the marginal changes anticipated by marginal incrementalism?

Since these are questions raised in the review and not in the book, answers must be culled by inference. However, the book makes it abundantly clear that the authors believe that our society does substantially embody the seven basic values. Little concern is voiced that we might be drifting away from them and the inference is clear that in this instance too we remain in status quo.

Regarding the question as to who will be in charge of possible changes, the answer is: society itself, on the silent assumption that ours is a society that consists of a number of more or less articulated, better or worse organized interest groups which, through the processes enumerated above (price-system, hierarchy, etc.), will arrive at a fairly equitable allocation of resources and incomes and preserve freedom and democracy. In other words, it is assumed that ours is a pluralistic society in which power, though not exactly evenly distributed among various groups, is sufficiently fragmented to assure a general tendency toward a more equitable balance and democratic choices. This is a questionable assumption, as the Dixon-Yates affair is again demonstrating.

SUMMING UP, WE CAN SAY that this book stands almost as a paradigm of the pragmatic approach to the social sciences. Its virtues are scientific objectivity, thoroughness and fairness as well as devotion to the values of democracy. Its shortcomings result, in the main, from that ideological near-sightedness which is congenital to pragmatism, from the refusal to see the larger, impalpable trends which cannot be observed under the microscope of daily statistics.

In this particular case the scientist's devotion to the "hard facts" and his revulsion from the larger view is strengthened by the social planner's knowledge that he can operate successfully only as long as he does not tinker too much with present institutions. Because planning is, despite its usual association with revolutionary ideology, basically a conservative function. Planning is feasible only where mores and institutions endure, where the future can be viewed as a fairly uncomplicated projection of the past and where sufficient uniformity through time and space can be assumed to permit reliance on the laws of probability.

But where the regimen is altered abruptly and things change rapidly, no planning is possible. Medieval men could not plan the Industrial Revolution, nor could the French bourgeoisie predict the course of the French Revolution, and Marx proved himself a proverbially bad prophet concerning the communist revolution. It was Koestler, I believe, who made the point that history and the mystic life both move in quantum jumps and that one level could not understand, much less plan, the next higher one. All one can do is to prepare and to wait for the unexpected to happen.

Thus the authors' advocacy of planning is in itself a declaration of faith in the continuation of the status quo.*

* This holds equally for socialist planning, which could become operative only when sufficient continuity of the new regimen had been established. As a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is grounded on the expectation that our society will endure on an even keel and that the institutions which currently order our lives will not have to undergo any significant changes to meet the threats of communism, colonial nationalism, unemployment and atomic energy. This sort of faith is, at best, a hazardous Pascalian wager.

THEODORE FRANKEL

---

matter of fact, the older socialists did not concern themselves overly with planning for the socialist state, because they believed that the problems of production would have been solved for them by capitalism and they dismissed the problems of distribution by such rather simple formulae as: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs. Modern socialists have evolved more elaborate models, but socialist parties actually in power have not, by and large, adopted them. Again the endeavor to project correctly the contours of a new social order from the possibilities inherent in the old order has imposed impossible demands on the human imagination.

BOOKS RECEIVED

THE SEIZURE OF POWER—*by Czeslaw Milosz.* Criterion Books. New York, $3.50. An interesting novel set in Poland, 1944, by the author of *The Captive Mind.* Highly praised by anti-Stalinist intellectuals in Europe, it was awarded the Prix Littéraire Européen.

ANVIL is a youth and student magazine, radical, anti-Stalinist, anti-war, civil libertarian in emphasis.

The spring-summer issue includes:

Asia, Africa and Hope by Fenner Brockway, M.P.; Sartre: Politics vs. Philosophy by Abe Stein; Gandhi and New Asian Socialism by Brijen K. Gupta; 'A House is Not a Home'—Liberals in the Democratic Party by Jerry Phillips; Anti-Americanism in the British Labor Party by Alan Ross; Today's Liberals and Civil Liberty by Michael Harrington.

36 East 10 Street
New York City 25c

Miscellany

The Public Opinion Detectors

Sebastian Frank

> The master no longer says: 'You shall think as I do or you shall die'; he says: 'You are free to think differently from me and to retain your life, your property and all your power; but you are henceforth a stranger among your people.'
>
> —De Tocqueville

THIRTY YEARS AGO WALTER LIPPMAN had already noted that the manufacture of consent is capable of great refinements and that a revolution was taking place in the techniques of this manufacture. By now the techniques for creating consent have been so completely "improved," that the question may seriously be raised: how genuine are the answers any public opinion poll can obtain?

The manipulation of public opinion is obvious enough, but its extent is hardly recognized. It has developed with the same speed as the mass communication industries themselves. The newspapers, magazines, radio, television and movies incessantly implant a pattern of thought into the minds of their customers and create a climate of feeling in which the ready-made opinions they deliver can thrive the most. Today, in consequence, it is quite possible to imagine a quasi-totalitarian society in which the means of communication largely replace force as the apparatus of compulsion.

Opposition to established public opinion becomes increasingly difficult. The few means for expressing dissident ideas are as to the big communication industries as handicraft to automation. Moreover, people resent the very idea of disagreement. In his isolation and insecurity, modern man clings all the more to accepted opinions. To share the opinion of the nation" is to feel at least a measure of security. We approach the condition described by de Tocqueville

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the passage at the head of this article: men are unable or unwilling to take upon themselves the hardship of living as "strangers among their people." They adapt themselves to the opinions they think they *ought* to have. Looking ahead, De Tocqueville drew a gloomy picture of the citizen in a modern democracy:

> Not only does he mistrust his strength, but he even doubts of his right; and he is very near acknowledging that he is in the wrong, when the greater number of his countrymen asserts that he is so. The majority do not need to force him; they convince him.

DESPITE THIS MANIPULATION of public opinion, the assumption is widely accepted that the better we can explore majority opinions the more perfect will be our democratic order. If a machine could be invented scientifically to register all opinions and announce the majority opinion in each case—a Public Opinion Detector—many people would acclaim such an invention as the greatest success of our democracy.

This Public Opinion Detector would turn out to be a close relation to the lie detector about which Murray Hausknecht wrote, in a recent DISSENT, that it stems from that search for certainty which marks the totalitarian mind. I would suggest that it is this very same search for certainty arising from fear and insecurity which creates the great interest in public opinion polls. Once we could claim to have an *infallible* means for ascertaining majority opinion, the pressure as well as the willingness to submit to it would become enormous.

But even without such a monstrous machine, we approach the condition it could create. The public opinion poll already has many dehumanizing effects on the minds of people. It separates an opinion from its context, as from the various assumptions under which it has been conceived; it takes a particular opinion out of the general flow of thought in which it is imbedded; it presents an opinion as a definite answer which has been disengaged from all the conditions and all the reasonings that prompted it.

Soon a majority opinion appears as *the* opinion. The concern of people is decreasingly with the reasons for opposing views, increasingly with how large a percentage of the population has expressed the majority view. Opinions counted seem to be elevated from the category of argument to the category of fact.

Actually, there is a vicious circle in which the answers to the opinion poll become less and less authentic, less and less the outcome of a clash of ideas and more and more the product of external and built-in pressure. But even on the sheer level of opinion, the poll may be inaccurate: the answer received may really be *yesterday's* answer because today's cannot yet be expressed in precise terms.

NONETHELESS, DEEP-GOING CHANGES OCCUR in the public mind. In the long run, no system of valuation and no way of thinking can survive changes in the structure of society. If the mode of production alters social relations, the new relationship will be reflected in the mind of people. How does a stagnating public mind react when the basis of existing beliefs has withered away? What will happen if people still listen to the same slogans and exhortations and become confused because the facts of life have changed and their experience conflicts with the views they have so long accepted? De Tocqueville had such questions in mind when he wrote:

> Time, events, or the unaided individual action of the mind will sometimes undermine or destroy an opinion without any outward sign of the change. It has not been openly assailed, no conspiracy has been formed to make war on it, but its followers one by one noiselessly secede . . . until at last it is only professed by a minority. In this state it will still continue to prevail. As its enemies remain mute or only interchange their thoughts by stealth, they are themselves unaware for a long period that a great revolution has actually been effected; and in this state of uncertainty they take no steps . . . the majority has ceased to believe what they believed before, but they still pretend to believe, and this empty phantom of public opinion is strong enough to chill innovators and to keep them silent and at a respectful distance.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What de Tocqueville assumed as possible we experience. While the "American ideology" is still beset by the "free enterprise" complex, reality has become "Un-American." Slowly the "Welfare State" has taken roots in the soul of the American people. These roots are deep enough to induce the Republican Administration to continue welfare policies after having attacked them as "creeping socialism" for so many years. In the country as a whole we encounter a widening gap between the mode of speaking and the mode of thinking which reflects the difference between the true conditions of life and the "American ideology."

Because of this cleavage between prevailing ideology and the hidden feelings and latent interests of people, opinion polls cannot really discover what people think or desire. Answers are very often given in terms which conceal rather than reveal people's wishes—wishes they may not even dare confess to themselves.

THE SOCIAL SCIENTIST who collects public opinions for analysis as a botanist may collect species of plants can easily misinterpret public opinion. Like the psychoanalyst he has to look for the "defense mechanism" which prevents people from expressing their desires and true thoughts.

The politicians waiting for the answers they can obtain from public opinion polls are like the people who count the echo or like a guide who follows it instead of showing the way. They gaze at public opinion but they see a distorted picture. The interest they take in public opinion does not stem from a reverence for the people; it stems from a debased view of the people. By taking the manipulated and obsessional forms of the public mind at its face value, politicians and administrators simply exalt and confirm existing prejudice.

THE PHENOMENA AT WHICH WE HAVE POINTED—the manipulation and idolization of public opinion—strengthen each other and form a vicious circle. The readiness of people to accept ready-made opinions and the willingness of the leaders of the country to be led by the echo of these opinions has at least one common reason in the lack of a real challenge to the existing state of mind. Without such a challenge the issues of the day remain in the dark and no broad political concepts exist on the basis of which the individual problem can be judged. Without such a concept the people and their leaders always wish to take as guidance "what other people think." Those whose aim is to maintain the status quo are not interested in visions and political concepts unless they are forced to it by an opposing power.

The lack of a true opposition in America's political life is leading towards a general stagnation in political thinking. Without the confrontation of basically different views people are not aware of opportunities for choice. Resistance to the manipulation of the public mind could come only from an organized opposition, the very existence of which would already relieve the individual from some of the public opinion pressures. The confusion which stems from the clash between the fixed American ideology and the reality can hardly be overcome without such an organized effort to raise the general level of political awareness. Lacking that, conformism will grow further and may finally lead to the impasse de Tocqueville had feared:

> I fear that (modern society) will ultimately be too invariably fixed in the same institutions, the same prejudices, the same manners, so that mankind will be stopped and circumscribed; that the mind will swing backwards and forwards forever without begetting fresh ideas; that man will waste his strength in bootless and solitary trifling, and, though in continual motion, that humanity will cease to advance.

MOVING?

Subscribers: *Please advise us* immediately of any change of address. Use *Form* 22, available at any Post Office. Second class mail is *not* forwarded by the Post Office. DISSENT cannot replace copies to subscribers lost through failure to advise us of change of address.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHAT I THINK OF ARTISTIC FREEDOM

continued from page 98

zines whose circulation is pitifully small. Still, this is better than total zero. Stalinism, in its churchly wisdom, has recognized for decades that nothing is more difficult to anticipate than the movement and growth of ideas; therefore it permits no expression beyond the most clearly defined limits.

There was a period some years ago when I was half-attracted to Stalinism, and so I am not unfamiliar with the muscular appeal it offers many intellectuals. "Poor frustrated spindly thinker," Stalinism is constantly saying, "when will you realize that your problems are not the problems of the world, and that all men must eat before one man can be privileged to think independently." Like all absolute assertions it presents a part of the whole. For it is undeniable that there is shame as well as dignity to thought so long as only a few have leisure enough to search for it. The lie, however, and it is the organic contradiction of Stalinism that it cannot recognize this lie which has haunted it, confused it, and even created the insoluble tangles of its very economic inefficiency, has been the lie, the arrogance, of assuming that human development can proceed on a half-truth. The false humility of Stalinist self-criticism is always arrogance, for there is no arrogance like declaring that one's past works and actions led people in bad directions. It assumes the ridiculous conceit that one's present works are therefore good.

Out of this arrogance Stalinism has defined what the artist is, has allocated his specific work, has granted him a specific collective importance, and has denied him a private voice. Like most Western artists I have been tormented more than once by the nightmare of possessing a private voice. All too often one's work seems meaningless, isolated, and one's accomplishments pitiful. Yet it must never be forgotten that despair about the meaning of one's work is more vital to the creative process than social approval. To create, one must first destroy; to be capable of love one must be able to hate, and nothing dulls love and hatred into their pallid social equivalent so much as social approval. Only when the artist is ready to accept despair, isolation, contraction and spiritual exile can he be able to find the expansive energies and the unrestrained enthusiasm which continue the essential dialectic of human progress. The genius of Marx was that he was a mystic as well as a rationalist, and the intellectual deterioration of Socialism, not to mention the mental petrifaction of Stalin-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ism, comes from denying the mystical element in Marxism and championing the rational. In human history there is finally one umbilical conflict: it is man versus society. For society always consists of the search for the single understanding, the "One," the rational judgment, the established value or the value to be established; the spectrum of society runs the unilinear gamut of those things admired absolutely to those things detested absolutely. Implicit in every social view is the concealed notion that society (which is One) is good, and man (who is multiple) is thereby bad, man who is mysterious and finally undefinable for he includes the expanding sum of all those things (people, thought, the Self, experience, the universe—one may extend the list indefinitely) all those things man must forever love-and-hate, hate-and-love. So, society, which is necessary to enable man to grow, is also the prison whose walls he must perpetually enlarge. The paradox of this relation—half-wedding, half-prison—is that without man there cannot be society, yet society must always seek to restrain man, and the total socialization of man is the social view that one man is good and another man is bad.

It is the artist, embodying the most noble faculty of man—his urge to rebel—who is forever enlarging the walls. An artist who is not ahead of his time is not an artist—he is merely a social producer—and one does not need to be a Marxist to remember that Marx's most compassionate agony was felt for the horror of separating man from his creative tools. The Stalinists by converting their artists to social producers have exercised the crippling vanity of total society for they have made the error, I believe, of assuming that society can foresee the future when only man can do that. They have gelded the artist of his real and exciting purpose which is never to fashion huge social products, book editions running to five million copies and dachas and medals and *social* esteem, but rather is the deeper purpose to awake—if it be in but one other person and that in ways the artist did not expect nor even desire—the knowledge that what we see today as simple will later be understood as complex and what we think is complex will appear simple, that in the bad man there is good, and in the good man, bad, that everything if we look at it carefully enough, even a stranger's comment on the weather, is a door of perception opening to other doors. That is the artist's purpose—to open doors—and it is arrogance for the bureaucrat, no matter how intelligent, devoted, and subjectively convinced of his moral purity he may be, (I take the exceptional bureaucrat), to decide that the artist's function is to describe the glories of the room in which one remains. That is to make the artist a prisoner in a museum, a trustee in uniform, doomed forever to whine irritably at children that they must keep their fingers off the paintings. Feb. 1955

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DISSENT

is distributed exclusively by:

SELECTED OUTLETS
(B. De Boer)
POB 761, Hoboken, N. J.

We will place DISSENT anywhere. Send all inquiries regarding bundle orders, newsstands, bookstores, retail outlets, etc. to above address.

Also distributors of over 50 literary periodicals including:

Kenyon Review
Sewanee Review
Virginia Quarterly Review
Hudson Review
Partisan Review
Poetry
Perspectives USA
Diogenes, etc.

WHERE TO OBTAIN DISSENT

New York City (incomplete)

DOWNTOWN
Broadway & Rector St.
33 Park Row (curb)

GREENWICH VILLAGE
University Pl. Bookshop
69 University Place
Bookstore, 8th St. & Macdougal
Broadway and Waverly Place
Broadway & 8th St. N.E.
Dial Bookstore, 12th St.
(opposite New School)

EAST SIDE
73 Irving Place (18th St.)
23rd St. & 4th Ave., S.W.
28th St. & 4th Ave., S.E.
358 Lexington Ave. (40th St.)
623 Lexington Ave. (54th St.)
610 Madison Ave. (58th St.)
1100 Lexington Ave. (77th St.)
1156 Madison Ave. (86th St.)
1312 Madison Ave. (93rd St.)
1372 Madison Ave. (96th St.)

WEST SIDE
11th & 6th Ave., N.E.
23rd St. & 6th Ave., N.W.
28th St. & Broadway, S.W.
34th St. & 7th Ave., N.E.
45th St. & Broadway, S.E.
42nd St., near Library
334 West 57th St.
72nd St. & Columbus Ave., S.E.
339 Columbus Ave. (77th St.)
86th St. & Broadway, N.W.
96th St. & Broadway, S.W. (Horan)
2705 Broadway (103rd St.)
Adlo Stores, 106th & Broadway, S.E.
2882 Broadway (112th St.)
Columbia University Bookstore
157th St. & Broadway, N.W.
181st St. & Ft. Washington Ave., S.E.

BERKELEY, Calif.
U.C. Corner

HOLLYWOOD, Calif.
Universal News Agency
1655 North Las Palmas

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif.
City Lights Pocket Bookshop
261 Columbus Avenue

SHERMAN OAKS, Calif.
Contemporary Bazaar

CHICAGO, Ill.
Red Door Book Shop
1328 East 57th Street

CAMBRIDGE, Mass.
Felix Bookstore
Mandrake Bookstore, Boylston St.

ANN ARBOR, Michigan
Bob Marshall's Bookshop
211 South State St.

NEW ROCHELLE, N. Y.
Harold's Stationery

PITTSBURGH, Pa.
Kaufmann's Department Store, Book Dept.

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Whyte's Bookshop and Gallery

TORONTO, Canada
Roher's Bookstore

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED